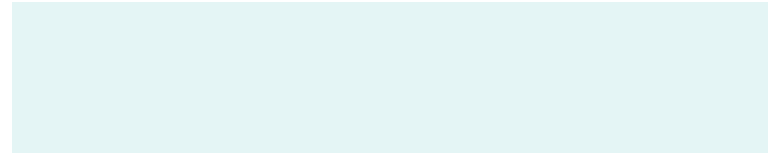

Understanding
Peer observation
Towards the development of reflective learning communities

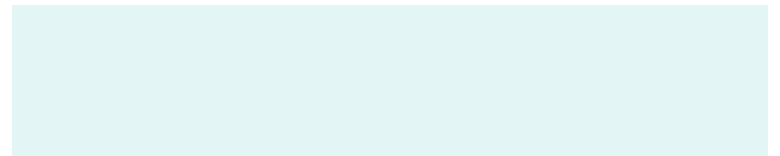
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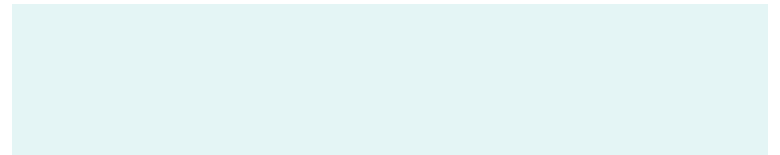
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Thesis project submitted for the completion of a **Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design**

Herron School of Art and Design // Indiana University Purdue University of Indianapolis

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Abstract

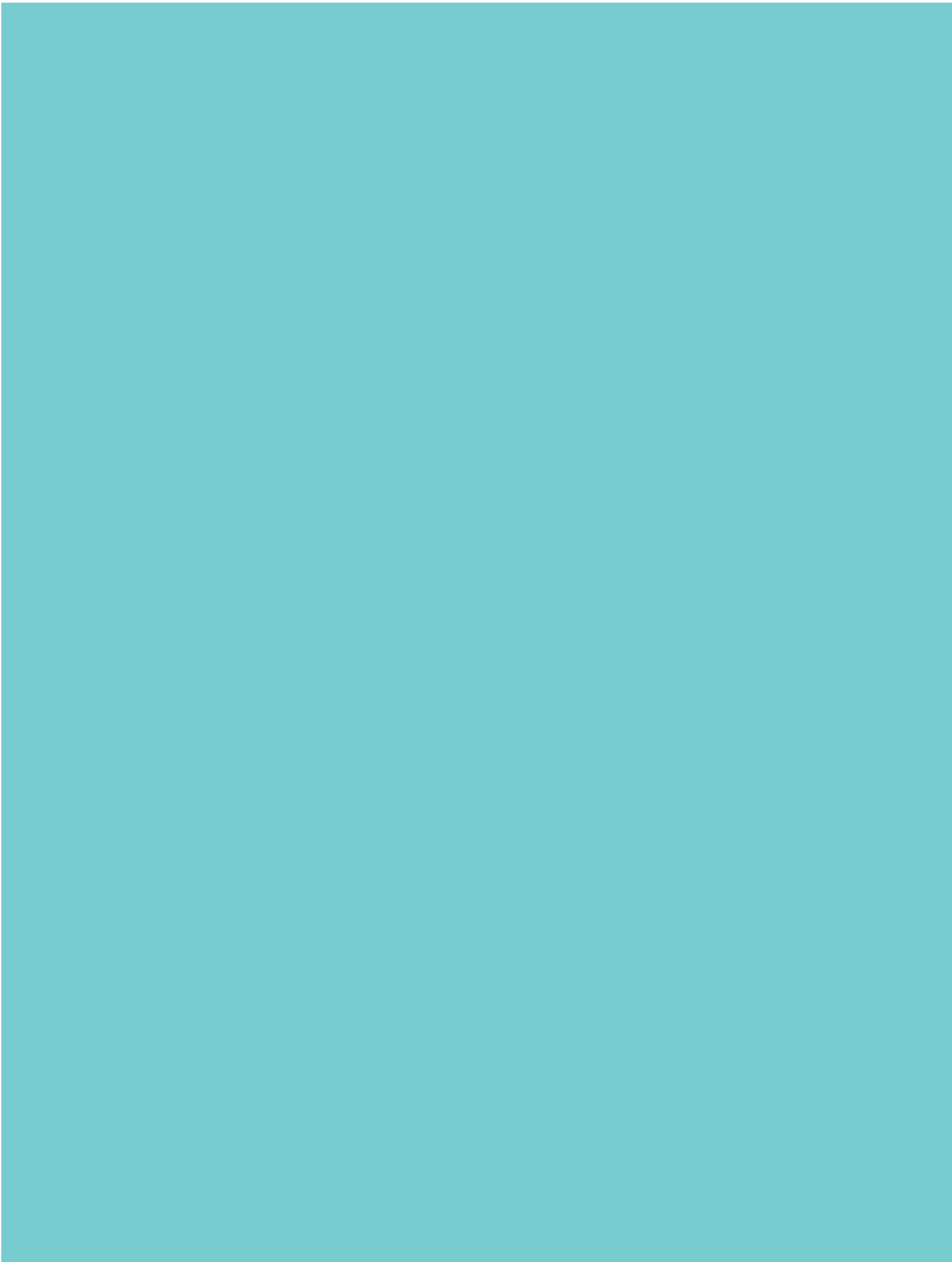
The peer observation process is implemented to evaluate teachers in their classrooms. On the other hand, this process seems to open a door for teachers to come together and learn from each other. With this interest of exploring the potential learning perspective on this process, the researcher sees the opportunity to implement a participatory design research.

A participatory design approach involves the engagement of teachers (in this case) within the process of problem exploration and solution development, rather than having teachers only as the subject of exploration.

This research covers the process of the participatory approach that allowed the understanding of the issue. Within this process, it is possible to see how the researcher facilitates the participants to externalize their knowledge and experiences in the peer observation process, as well, this research covers methodologies implemented for the analysis and synthesis of the information.

Through the implementation of the participatory design process, teachers were able to identify barriers that kept them from sharing as teachers, as well as to identify opportunities to enable them to learn from each other and forming learning communities.

From the perspective of the Department of Education, teachers are expected to participate in professional development activities, and peer observation is among those activities. Peer observation is a process that is implemented with the intention to evaluate teacher's effectiveness in the classroom, as well as to ensure teacher's accountability for the school. On the other hand, this process is also intended to encourage teachers to help and learn from each other. However, since the majority of teachers acknowledge this as an evaluative process, it seems to keep teachers emotionally away from each other and in that way they opt to learn in isolation.



Introduction

Teachers in observation

The Department of Education looks over schools to have more effective teachers within the education system. With that intention, school boards and policy makers work to improve the quality of education in American schools, a central focus of that effort is in the evaluation of teachers. However, evaluation of teacher performance is seldom conducted in any rigorous way. ¹ Consequently, the Department of Education and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards agree on the importance of teacher's evaluation and participation in professional development activities, such as peer observation.

This approach is intended to measure teacher's effectiveness as well as to help teachers to learn new teaching methods, broaden their subject matter content knowledge, or stay informed of changing policies, among other purposes. However, seems that teachers feel pressure to participate in such activities. Thinking on an activity like the peer observation, entails an evaluative connotation in which teachers are being observed in their own space, and those evaluations are to ensure their effectiveness in class.

The purpose of evaluation from teachers perspective can viewed as an opportunity for a positive interaction and professional growth among colleagues or as a negative "requirement" that leads to frustration and distrust. ² Furthermore, it is important to point out that if these observations are taken as a negative approach allowing frustration and distrust, teachers tend to create an emotional barrier to interact with each other and can lead teachers to decide to work and learn in isolation.

This means, teachers fail evaluations, teachers are choosing not to ask for help to other colleagues, and are missing the opportunity of receiving constructive feedback that add value to their professional teaching development.

This research intends to explore why teachers decide to work and learn in isolation. This path of isolation is seen as a major obstacle for teachers to improve and for schools to succeed. ³ Consequently, within the area of education, this action of deprivation of interaction in front of other teachers may be seen as an admission of their professional incompetence. ⁴ And very often when teachers seek out professional growth opportunities on their own and attempt to implement them without the support of others teachers their strategies are not successful. ⁵

Since teachers are been called to participate into evaluative processes, such as the peer observation process. The peer observation process is implemented on teachers with the purpose to measure their effectiveness. It is during the implementation of this process, where teachers have expressed sort feeling of violation when someone walks into their classroom since this space is considerate their private space. ⁶

This research explores the opportunity on this peer observation process for teacher to share and learn from each other. It is in the intention of this research to understand more about the factors that arise those feelings of violation among teachers.

Those emotions seem to be reflected in the idea of teacher's preference of working alone and not forming meaningful and professional relationships. As well, this research intends to create an understanding of how this observation process might be the vehicle for teachers to create and be part of learning communities, as suggested by the Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

So, with the purpose of improving teachers interactions in order to support teacher's effectiveness, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards proposes that teachers should think systematically about their practice, and learn from experiences, as well that teachers should be members of learning communities. This means, teachers should embrace the opportunity to work together and learn from each other experiences during evaluative observations.

Understanding experiences

Presently, designers are being challenge to not only sell or manufacture experiences to “customers”. Designers are being challenge to be more sensitive and see people as people, rather than “users” or “consumers”. Therefore, designers seek for people to be directly more involved in the process of designing their own experiences. This means, for designers, to point towards a human-centered design revolution. ⁷

Working at this participatory manner, allow people into the design process as adapters of the designed artifact, experience or even as a cocreator. People that are involved in the process possess their unique and relevant expertise. ⁸ Therefore, in participatory experiences, designer’s objective is to study tacit knowledge. ⁹

In other words, designer’s role is to act as a facilitator and to provide participants with tools to help them uncover knowledge that is implicit rather than explicit, holistic rather than bounded and systematized; is what people know without being able to articulate. ¹⁰ Subsequently, designers’ work is to make meaning out of this data and cooperatively drive people to create and test a solution.

Research question

How might **participatory design** enable the development of a **relationship** based **peer observation process** that enhances **learning communities** among teachers?

Sub Questions

1. What is the value of a participatory design approach to explore the peer observation process?
2. How might the elements of design that are incorporated in the participatory approach enable to explore which factors affect teacher's relationships during the peer observation process?
3. How might the identified characteristics to enhance teacher's relationships be integrated into the peer observation process?

Key words:

Participatory design: An approach characterized by teacher involvement, and as the way to understand knowledge by doing.

Relationship: represent one aspect of teacher involvement with each other. ¹¹

Peer observation process: Observational process that places teachers in control of improving existing skills or developing new skills.

Learning communities: Teachers who have opportunities for learning available alongside the work task they perform.



Justification

Why learning communities?

Teaching most commonly is regarded as the daily conduct of lessons and the provision of learning experiences. But the work of teaching reaches beyond the boundaries of individual classrooms to wider communities of learning. ¹²

Learning communities mainly consist of individuals who have opportunities for learning available alongside the work task they perform. ¹³ Some schools feature these opportunities of collaboration for teachers, and likewise, there are other schools that discourage such activities of development for teachers.

This research understands the advantages of collaborative learning, and aims to understand what drives teachers to improve their experiences on helping each other and build learning communities. Within these learning communities, teachers gain skills to handle new situations and learn how to structure personal learning, and gain knowledge to identify they own needs to become an effective teacher.

Isolation problem

Despite the advantages that learning in community might bring for some teachers, seems that the idea of teaching and “learning” in isolation is more appealing for others. However, some professional in the area of education mention that for teachers that collaborate within this structure of separation, they act in this manner due to the fear of exposing themselves in front of other teachers.

Seems that exposing themselves (asking for help or looking for feedback) may be seen as an admission of their professional incompetence ¹⁴, along with the fear of loosing a job, image or status. ¹⁵

Teachers working by themselves are most likely to be unable to cope with the pressure of observational processes, pushing themselves to either abandon their profession or looking for ways to cheat during the evaluative observations. Clearly, this situation is a concern for school boards that seek to have more effective teachers in their schools.

“Besides keeping themselves away from exposing themselves to other teachers, decreasing interaction causes teachers to lose the opportunity to share successes”

The opportunity within peer observation

Teachers whether working together or individually, are under continuous supervision to guarantee their effectiveness in their teaching areas. This concern of maintaining high-level teachers and keeping them in constant supervision derives from the need of keeping schools accountable for each area or state they serve. Indeed, school authorities are implementing the peer observation process.

This process encourages teachers to interact with each other within their classrooms, and with the purpose to improve or develop existing teaching skills. ¹⁷ In previous years, peer observation was referred as “peer supervision”, and it had the same objective, as now, for teachers. Which is meant to help each other to improve their teaching skills.

However, it seems that the term of “peer supervision” had a negative connotation, in which teachers felt they were under scrutiny by someone with superior knowledge and was assigned to oversee their work. ¹⁸

It seems that these feelings of being supervised by other teachers keeps coming every time when peer observation is mentioned. Few teachers have expressed a feeling of violation of their space when someone walks into their classroom, since this space is entitled to be their individual domain. ¹⁹ In other words, classrooms are often so closed to outsiders that there could be a sense of intrusion whenever there is a visitor. ²⁰ This is then, when teachers opt to work in isolation.

So, it is possible to understand that from the school authorities perspective, the peer observation aims to evaluative and measure teacher’s effectiveness, asides from being a process to set teachers on helping each other. Teacher’s perspective seems to be divided between those who see the value on learning

The peer observation put teachers to interact in three different occasions.

- Day 1: Pre-conference, observed teacher meets with observer teachers to talk about the lesson that will be performed.
- Day 2: Observation, observant teachers engage into observing a lesson in the designated teacher’s room.
- Day 3: Post-conference, where observers and the observed teacher meet again to discuss and evaluate the lesson.

“Likewise, accountability may influence the willingness of schools to retain teachers”¹⁶

“Understanding knowledge in participatory design refers to the importance of understanding such knowledge that tends to be tacit. In other words, tacit is knowledge is what people don’t know they know or know without being able to articulate” ²²

from other teachers, and those who feel it is a violation of their privacy. So, what is exactly involved during the peer observation process?

Moreover, the objectives of this performing this observation process are: sharing knowledge, progressive disclosure, mutual respect, the development of collective expertise, which surpass that of individuals, genuine inquiry, and a determination to improve communities in which teacher learners engage and in which they value. ²¹

However, as it has been mentioned before, the peer observation functions as an evaluative process that put teachers into each other’s classrooms, and this evaluative processes run several risks, such as spurring competition and displacing cooperation among teachers, teaching to the test at the expense of boarder subject exploration, and turning the teaching profession from a noble calling into a mercenary occupation. Being under this sense of scrutiny, teachers, especially those new teachers, tend to move from school to school, fail, or leave the profession.

With this in mind, this research focuses on the understanding of teacher’s working behavior among other colleagues during the peer observation process. This research sees the peer observation as the vehicle that allows teachers to interact with each other, into each other classroom, in three different occasions. It is in the intention of this research to understand the peer observation process during these three meetings frame time, as it is the opportunity for teachers to work on enhancing their relationships towards the creation of learning spaces for themselves.

By relationship, it refers to the aspect in which teachers get professionally involved with each other. So, it is the intention of this research to explore and uncover what can possibly aid teachers to work with the peer observation as a way to help each other, instead of using this process as a platform to indirectly attack other teachers. This research also focuses on facilitating teachers to discover and articulate opportunities to improve their observation experiences, towards enhancing environments for learning.



Limitations

“Having access to people’s experiences (past, current and potential) then those experiences are the source of inspiration and ideation for design”. ²⁵

Particularly, this research do not intends to discover new theories in the area of participatory design or to generate a new evaluative structure for the peer observation process implemented at schools. Basically taking a participatory design approach, this research will allow participants and researcher to uncover and articulate elements to promote learning communities for teachers at school using the peer observation process as the vehicle to get there. In other words, participatory design open the doors for an evolution not a revolution. ²³

It is with this idea that this research aims to understand the peer observation process and the system around it. This means, considering to include perspectives coming from teachers, principal, existent rubrics, past literature, etc. Through participatory design, this research aims to implement a diverse range of design research methods to participants (Teachers, Principals, staff, not students).

This research begins with an assumption that teachers share specific amount of information during the observation process, due to its evaluative denotation. This research is not concern about the numerical evaluation that teachers might receive either before or after a peer observation. Therefore this research is concerned about what aspects of the process affect teachers' relationships during the observation that deprive them from sharing more knowledge and keeps them away from improving their teaching experience.

The peer observation is a process that can be applied into any educational setting, from kindergarten up to college level. This research limits the range of participants for teachers from k-8. In other words, this research focuses on elementary education peer observation. Primary education is the base of educational system and where it is more important for teachers to work together.

This research intends to analyze teacher's experiences. Therefore approaching with participatory design refers to the involvement of participants, so they can express themselves and pro actively participates in the design development process. ²⁴ In fact, having access to people's experiences (past, current and potential) then those experiences are the source of inspiration and ideation for design. ²⁵



Research Development

Sub-Q 1

What is the value of a participatory design approach to explore the peer observation process?

Introduction

It is in the interest of this research to explore and understand the peer observation process with the purpose of looking for opportunity spaces in which teachers are able to share their knowledge, and enabling collaborative learning. This spaces in which teachers commit to learn from each other, are considered learning communities. So, to begin with the exploration of the peer observation process to create an understanding based on the analysis of teacher's experiences, this research follows a process.

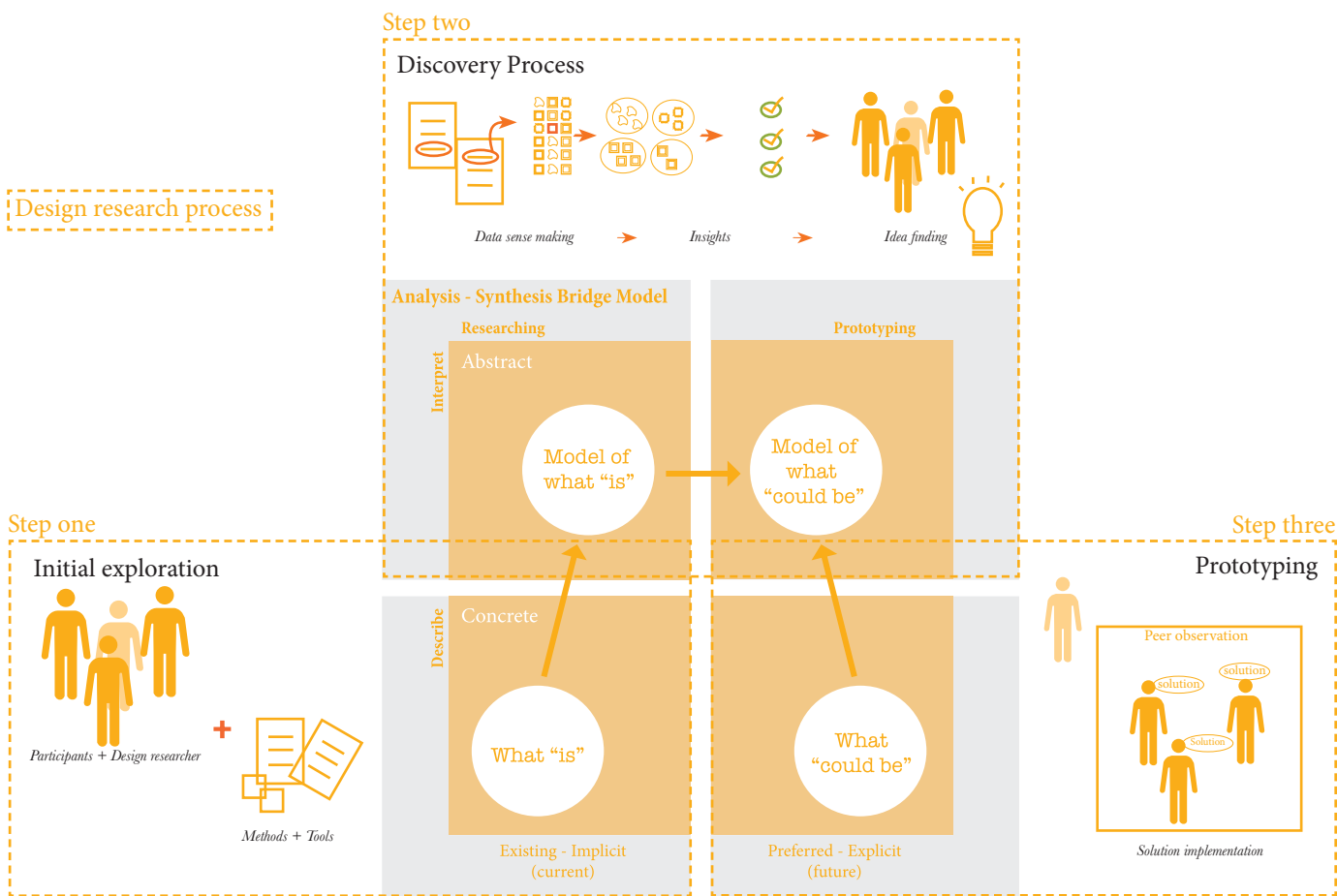
The relevance on this design research approach relies with the development and implementation of creative methods and tools to involve teacher through the process. Teacher's participation is essential during the initial exploration (understanding), as it is during solution ideation (prototype). Involving teachers means working along side with the experiences of experts in the area of peer observation.

As this research provides the participants teachers with tools and methods to enable them to articulate their experiences during the observation process, these tools and methods communicate their immediate knowledge, as well it reflect knowledge teachers didn't know they knew or simply were unable to properly articulate. This research seeks to translate and analyze those pure or unarticulated experiences, into meaningful insights to uncover opportunities spaces. Opportunity spaces in which teachers improve their teaching techniques with the peer observation process as the vehicle and consequently promote learning communities.

The design process for this research elicits the participant teachers to describe their concrete experiences with the implementation of design research methods, that develop a concrete idea of what "is" peer observation and their experiences. In other words, this step allows describing explicit information of current events in their experiences. Subsequently, this research takes the information for interpretation, begin to making sense of the data by creating models of what "is" within the recovered information from the research methods. To be able to form models of what "is", it is important to analyze the data that will eventually suggest to the creation of models of what "could be".

"Creating a better understanding of their experiences become vital to the process of communication" ²⁶

Data synthesis opens up to the creation of models of feasible opportunities for teachers and their experiences with peer observation. Lastly, participant teachers are engaged in the process to concretizes models of what “could be” into actionable prototype of what “could be” within the peer observation that enhances teacher’s relationship promoting learning communities.



This bridge model is used as a reference for this research as “it shows how designers and researchers move forward through a level of analysis in order to move forward through time to the next desired state. And models act as the vehicle for that move (1)”

Participants in the research

As it has been presented in previous descriptions, this research is teacher-centered, therefore it aims to take a participatory design approach. For that reason and with the purpose to drive this research towards the understanding of the peer observation process as the vehicle for teachers to learn from each other. Teachers from different areas within the k-8 grades, are invited to participate. Teachers are the experts in their field and each of them has their individual perspective of the experience of the peer observation. The total number of teachers participating in this research is six, with one of them being school principal.

This group of teachers are currently in the process of implementing peer observation in their school. At the time of this research, some teachers have already been observed, some acted as observer, some are getting ready to be observed, and the principal has been involved in the development of the rubric to follow for an observation process. Those details place each of these teachers with a different level of experience and perspective of the process, making this group appropriate for this research.



The object of this participatory approach is to take advantage of past, current and potential experiences of teachers during peer observation process, then use those experiences as source of inspiration and ideation for design.

Initial exploration

Beginning with the exploration for this research, a variety of design research methods and tools are implemented with the purpose, of learning from teachers experiences and gaining knowledge of their perspective of the peer observation process. By knowledge, this research refers to the subset information that is subjective, linked to a meaningful behavior and has tacit elements that are born from experience. ²⁷

To understand the difference between the terms 'tool' and 'method', 'Tool' is referred to the physical thing that is used as a means to an end. 'Method' is referred to the way the tool is employed.

And experience, is focused on those activities that occur when teachers are submitted to perform an observation. This means, the stages in which teachers prepare to participate as either observer or observed during the process. This research also seeks to create an understanding of teacher's behavior pre, during and post peer observation.

Following to the development of this research to the point of getting teachers involved into sharing their experiences, this research sees the importance for the research methods to be implemented from general to specific. In other words, this research seeks to get diverse levels of information. (Image 1)

Methods seeking general such as secondary research, group interview and ethnographic observation open up the general understanding of the issue as well as start a conversation with the participant teachers in order to get the ball rolling for the research. Then, a method as the sequential survey, seeks to acquire more specific information from teacher's experiences within the peer observation process. The sequential survey is intentionally implemented to the participant teachers seeking for reflective answers on their current experiences driving them to the reflection ideal opportunities to enhance their current experiences.

Design research methods

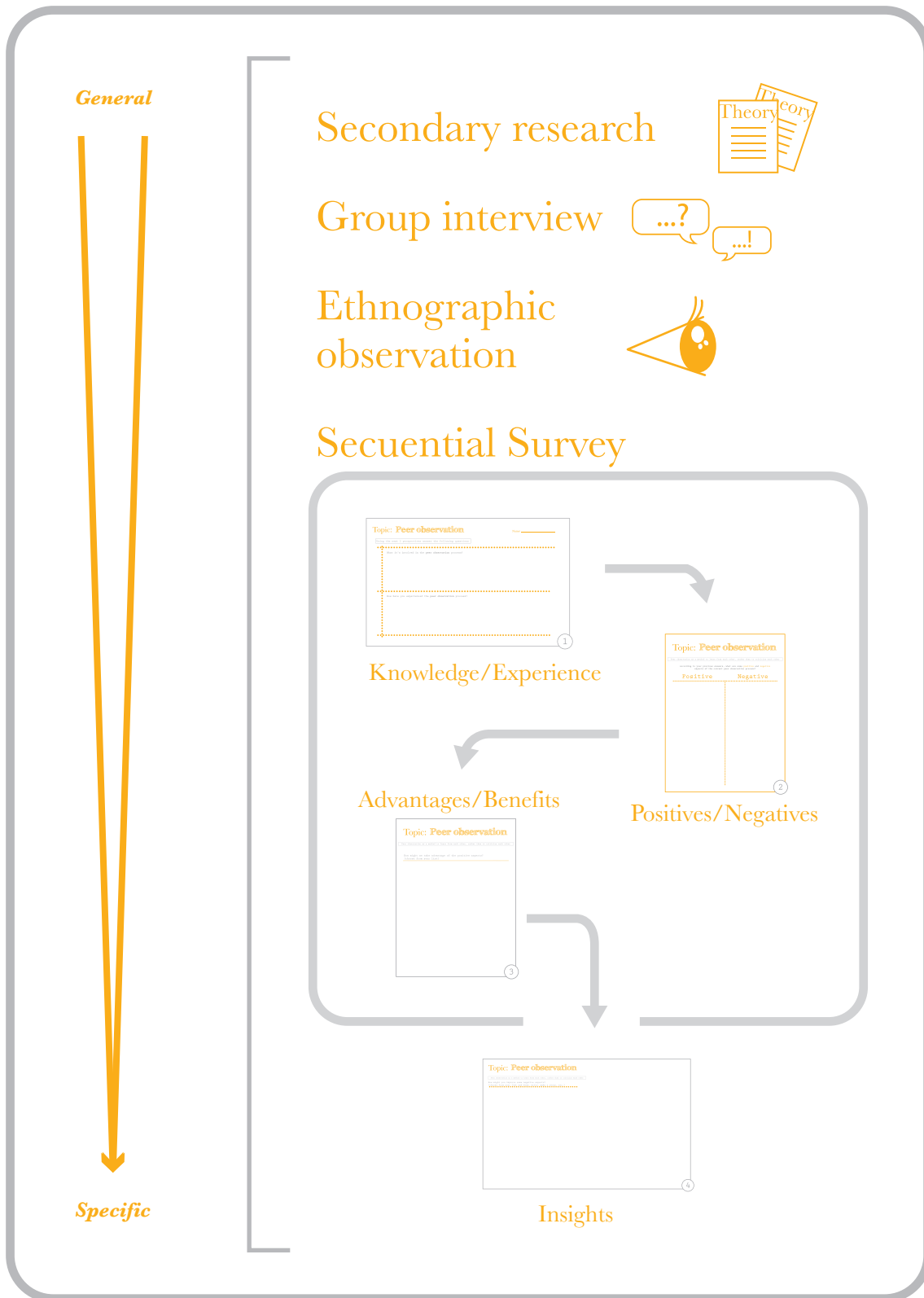
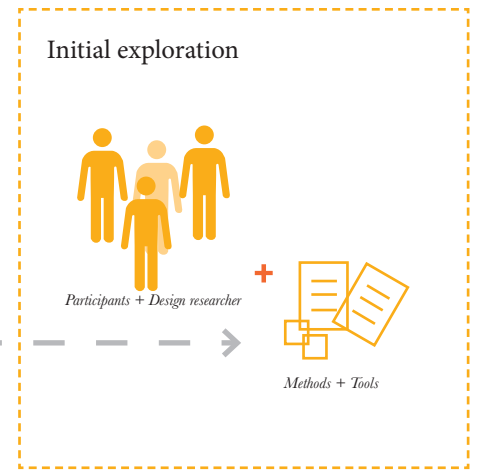


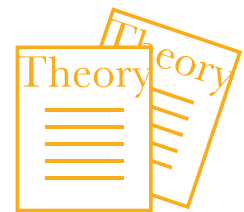
Image 1



Secondary research

In the search of creating an understanding of what “is” peer observation and how teachers experience the process and the interaction with each other, this research gathers information not only from the participants, but also from other sources like articles, books, etc. Secondary research refers to the exploration of past literature published by others experts in the area of education and/or peer observation that have already done some research regarding the issue.

Secondary research, adds a baseline of information that is aligned along with the participants data during analysis. Also, digging into secondary research helps this research to add perspectives of what other professionals in the area of education think about peer observation and what it brings to the world of teachers and their professional development.



Group interview

Performing a group interview at the beginning of the exploration of this research is about getting to know the participant teachers. This action allows the researcher to obtain a general perspective of teacher's knowledge of the peer observation process.

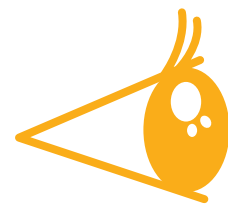
This method is about opening up a conversation with teachers to share thoughts and impressions about their role and experiences with the implementation of peer observation in their professional environment. Teachers are openly able to express more about their profession and share some of their thoughts about the evaluative measures implemented by the school.



Ethnographic observation

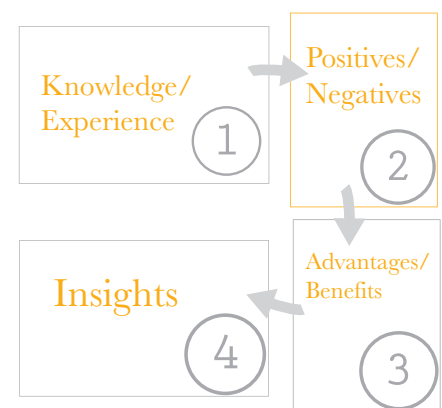
The idea of implementing an ethnographic observation is to see and experience the peer observation process along with the participant teachers. This method enables this research to add a researcher experience and perspective, which this information is lately aligned to understand other perspectives.

In other words, there is always a difference in between what teachers say they do and experience during the peer observation process, and what actually happens during the process. The researcher spent time with the participants during the three steps of the process, the pre-conference, the observation, and the post-conference.



Sequential survey

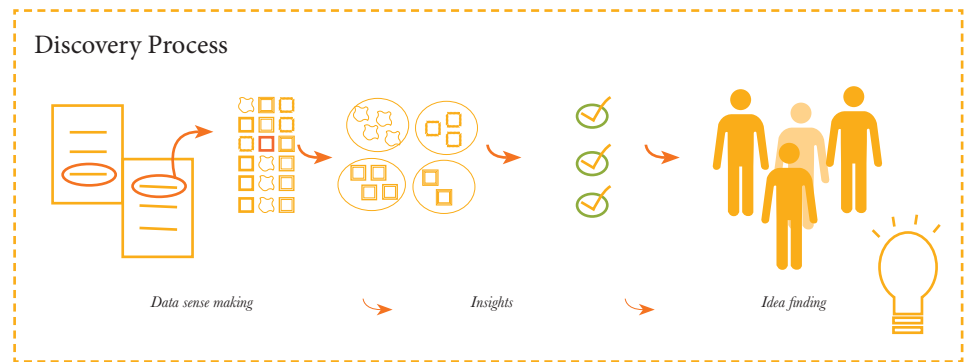
This method seeks to acquire more specific information from each participating teacher. This adds content to the intention of forming and understanding of what “is” peer observation. In this method teachers are driven through four different steps of this survey. As the teachers accomplish step one, step two drives them to make a reflection in step one in order to be able to continue, and the same happens with step three and step four. Step four invites teachers to summarize previous reflections and to translate it into a future reflection. The idea behind creating a future reflection is to dig deeper in their ideal experiences.





“Sense making process refers to the emphasis given to the action of finding relationships and patterns in between elements and forcing an external view of things.”

(Kolko, 15)



Discovery process

Step one of this research process focuses on gaining knowledge from teachers; exploration. On this second stage, this research focuses on understanding data, through a sense making process. This discovery process is all about doing analysis and synthesis of the information.

To begin the sense making process, it is important for this research to implement methods for analysis and methods for synthesis, as this research aims to translate that data and uncover important insights from teachers experiences and expectations that what might lead to the development of possible outcomes for teachers to better learn from each other.

A sense making process through the analysis – synthesis model drives this research from an abstract understanding of what “is” peer observation and the roles and teacher’s experiences, to an abstract idea of what “could be” within the peer observation process that will give teachers a different experience towards experiencing learning in communities.

In other words, making sense of the collected data is about finding patterns, identifying opportunities, creating visual models for understanding and creating visual modes for synthesis to the point of framing possible outcomes.

“Data analysis is considered as the preparation, and synthesis as the inspiration in within a design process”. ²⁸

In order to start gaining a more meaningful understanding of the recovered information, this research aims to divide the information in two parts. The first part of the information is conformed by the data gathered in the research methods with teachers, and the second part is the information gathered from past literature.

This means, part one encloses information from the group interview, the ethnographic observation, and the sequential survey. The part two encloses information from the secondary research. The intention behind this action is to analyze and synthesize two different perspectives.

First, the perspective of teachers currently experiencing peer observation in their schools, and second, the perspective of professionals in the area of education that have already placed their knowledge and experience on peer observation on literature form.

This approach aims to create a holistic understanding of experiences within the peer observation and as well as to form a synthesized frame of opportunities towards the development of a solution that enhances teacher's learning during the observation process.

Sub-Q 2

How might the elements of design that are incorporated in the participatory approach enable to explore which factors affect teacher's relationships during the peer observation process?

Sense making (part one)

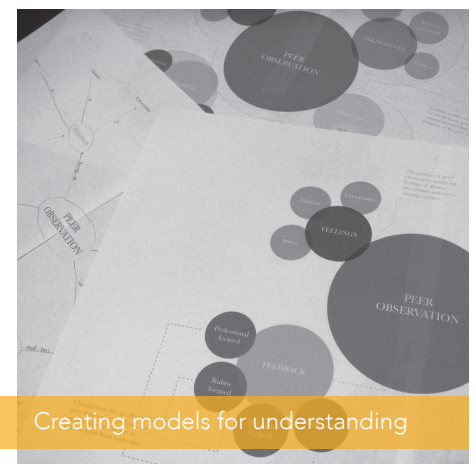
The sense making process of the first part begins with the transcription of the information gathered in the research methods applied to the participant teachers. Then, it continues with the placement of each given statement on an individual piece of paper (sticky note). From there, each statement is deeply analyzed seeking for more meaningful information beyond the given data.

“Externalizing is the opposite action of just maintaining and organizing the information within a single space, for example inside of a computer, where most of the times exploring the information as a whole is limited by a screen. ²⁹

This means, each statement is deconstructed by internally asking what is seen on that piece of information? What this information means? What are the opportunities within this statement? Working with the information in this manner, opens the door to form a broader understanding of teacher's experiences during the peer observation process.

After analyzing the data and continuing with the sense making process, this research starts synthesizing the information, looking for connections and pattern among the data. This action allows the creation of meaningful categories towards a more concrete definition of the issue.

Sense making and framing can be enhanced and supported through externalizing and through representation. ³⁰



Sense making (part one) findings

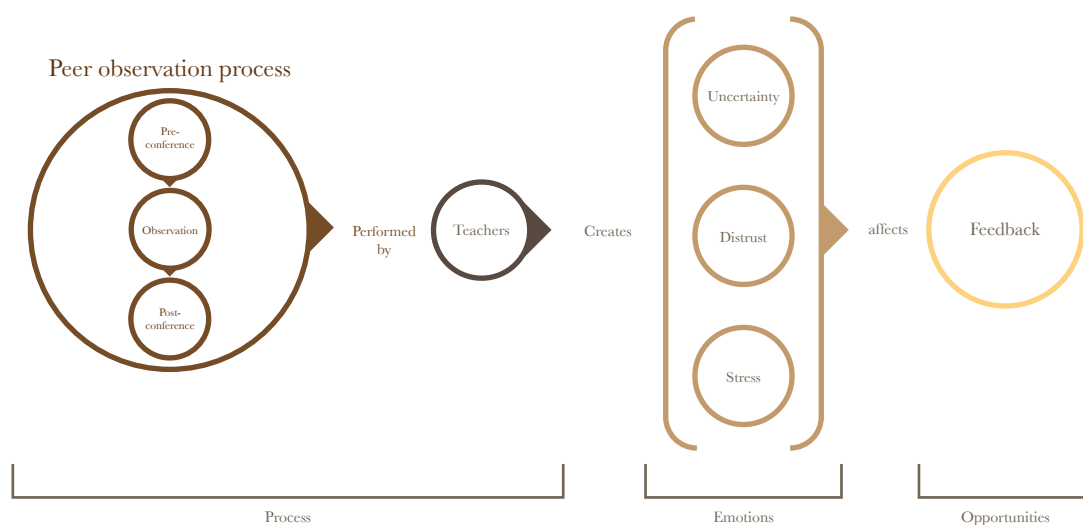
During this first round of analysis-syhtesis of the data, this research uncovered three main categories.

First, a category about ***process***: Teachers showed knowledge about specific steps and procedures during the performance of peer observation in a classroom setting. This category also informs how teachers regularly act and prepare to an observation. This means, as the peer observation process follows a rubric, teachers are evaluated through this criteria and at some point it seems relevant that teachers might be considered to gain some sort of compensation once completed this observation process and obtaining an approbatory review.

Second, a category about ***emotions***: it encloses sensitive information from teacher's perspective. Through synthesis, the information contained in this category, shows that teachers participating in the peer observation process primarily experience a sense of competition, fear and tension. In other words, teachers experience fear of losing a job, fear of making a mistakes, and fear of showing weakness in front of other teachers. As well, teachers experience tension with some believe that this might not be a good place to learn from each other. Also, some tension on the way the process is set up, and tension of losing a current position due to this evaluative observation.

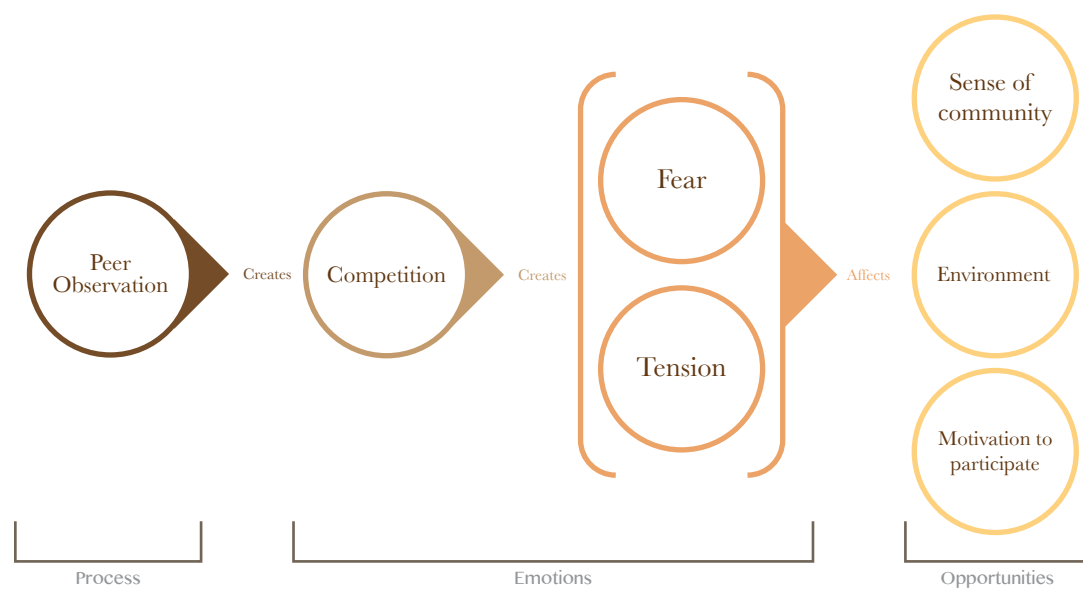
Third a category about ***opportunities***. At this point of the research, this category has the potential to shape possible outcomes. Teachers envisioned opportunities on how they see this process to create a better environment, and how to encourage each other to maintain a sense of community. This means, a sharing, objective, open and non-threatening environment for the observation process. Also, teachers defined sense of community, as the environment in which teachers are committed to make a change, develop objective feedback where teachers are able to learn new strategies from others and grow together as professionals.

Models for data understanding



This model shows an understanding of teacher's experiences and knowledge on peer observation. In order to get to this point of understanding, as mentioned before, this research conducted an analyzed - synthesise process and translated those findings into models.

"A model is a conjecture acting as a reasoned way of proposing how things might be" ³¹



This second model shows new perspectives of the same analyzed data. This model is possible through re-sorting the information looking for new insights.

“Modeling delineates between problem finding and problem solving, acting as a form of problem understanding.” ³²

Sense making (part two)

The sense making process for the second part of the data is conducted slightly different compared to the process followed with the first part of the information. This second part encloses information from existent literature (secondary research), and not from the participant teachers.

This data comes from similar researches in the area of education that have been has already been published in books or articles. This information is already part of the body of knowledge for the world of education with some emphasis on peer observation.

Therefore, the analysis-synthesis process for this information is conducted through visual modeling each individual professional perspective on the issue. Each models help to create a visual representation and understanding of the information.

This second part begins with the visualization of three different peer observation processes. (Image 2) Through visualization, this research is able to find similarities in between the three processes. The most evident similarities they share are the three main steps in the peer observation process. 1- Teachers meet to hear and discuss the class plan from the observed teacher. 2- Observed teacher performs class according to the plan and observed teachers evaluate according to the rubric. 3- Teachers meet to evaluate the performance of the observed teacher.

Although the “how” teachers perform and prepare themselves for the observation is slightly different on each visualized process, this research focuses on the general structure of the peer observation process, and not on the subject content.

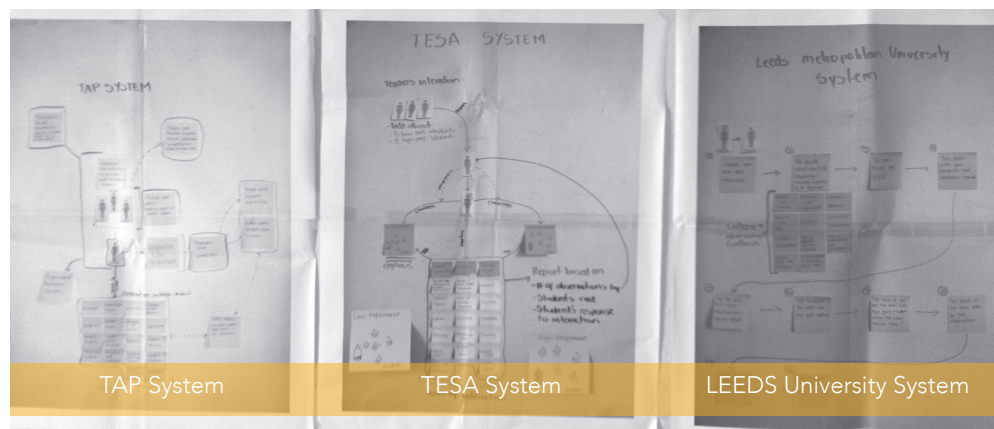


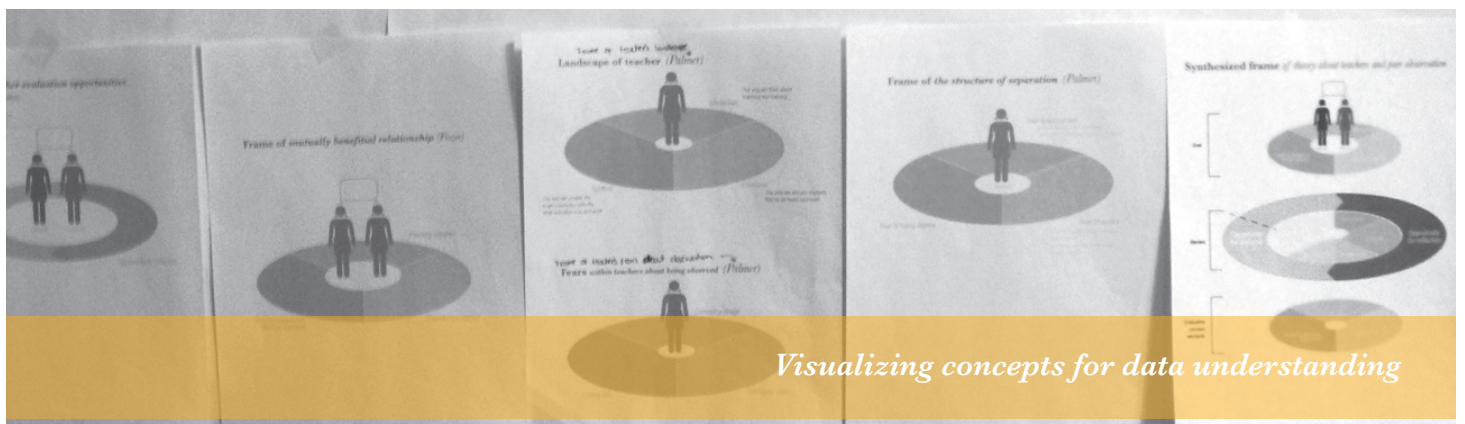
Image 2

Subsequently, this research visualized the rest of the information from different authors. This action adds an understanding of their perspective on the issue of peer observation, as it was also possible to understand their perspective on what they believe are roadblocks for teachers to learn from each other through the evaluative process. Without leaving behind their perspective on how teachers could benefit from this observation process.

Visualized concepts:

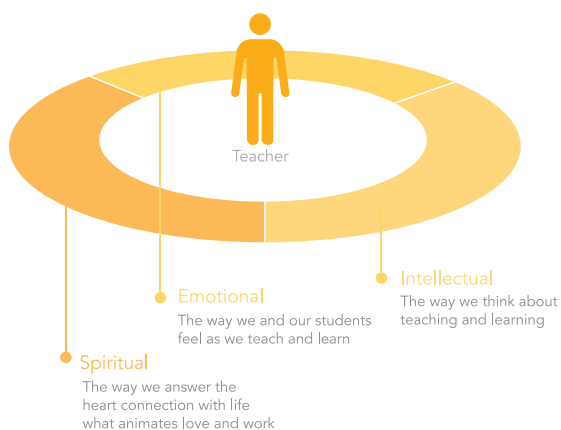
- Palmer, Parker J.
The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life.
* A Culture of Fear: Education and the Disconnected Life
* Knowing in Community: Joined by the Grace of Great Things
- Kohut, Gary F., Charles Burnap, and Maria G. Yon.
"Peer Observation of Teaching: Perceptions of the Observer and the Observed."
- Peterson, Penelope L., and Michelle A. Comeaux.
"Evaluating the Systems: Teacher's Perspectives on Teacher Evaluation."
- P. Fiszler, Edward. How Teachers Learn Best
* Peer Observation

Image #

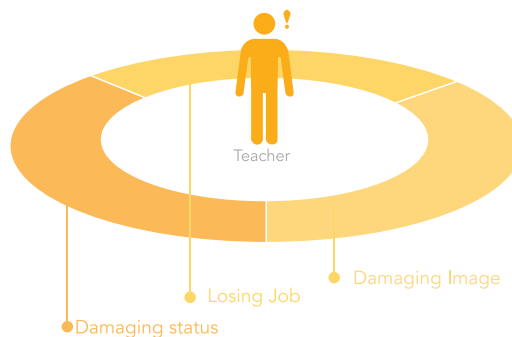


Concept models

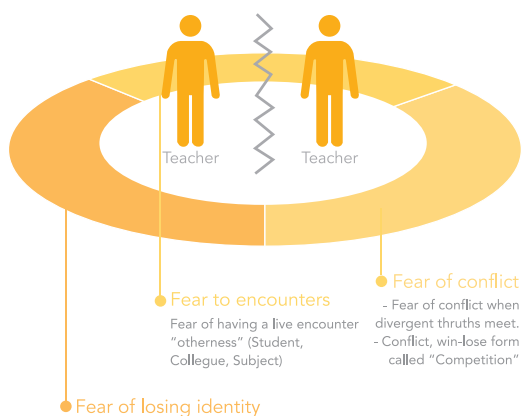
Teacher's landscape (Palmer)



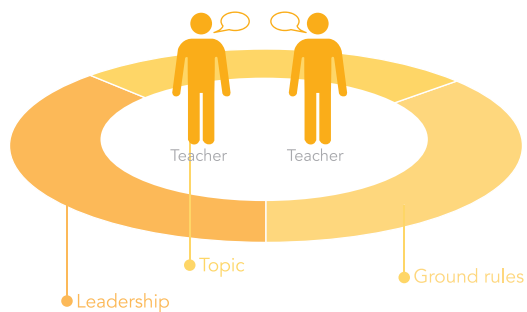
Teacher's fears when being observed (Palmer)

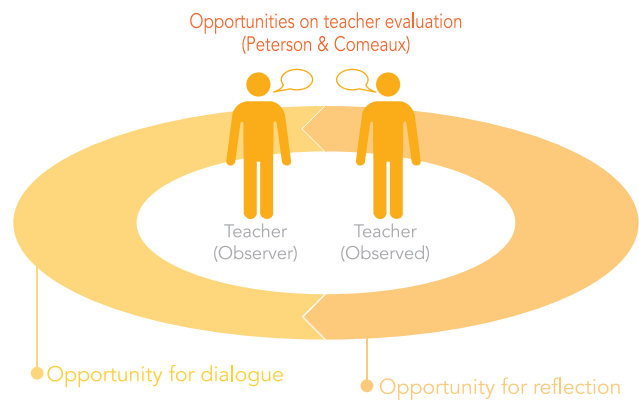
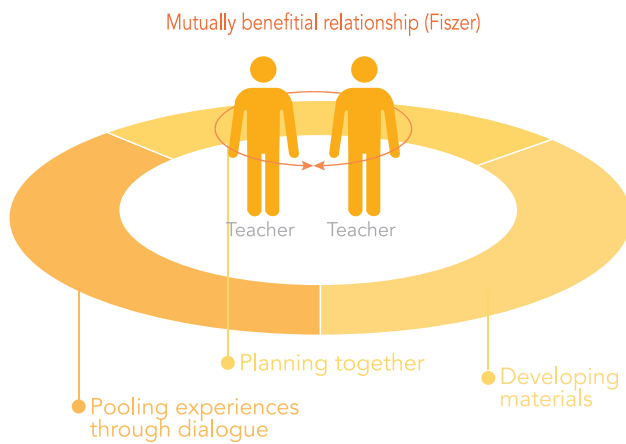


A structure of separation (Palmer)

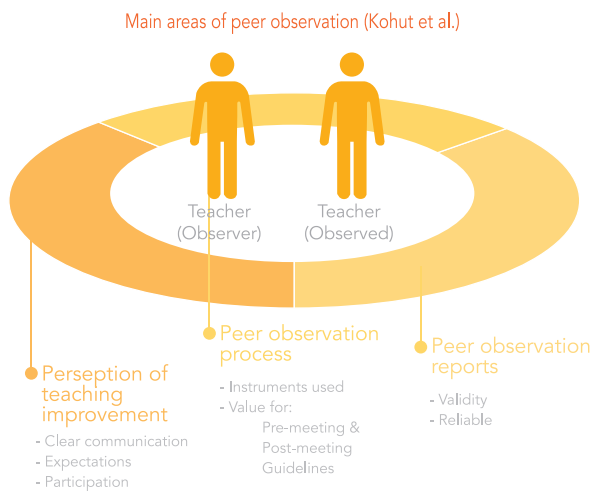


Conversation elements among colleagues (Palmer)





Shared understanding of good teaching
 Opportunity for the development and
 facilitation of teacher's reflection and teacher's practice.



Sense making (part two) findings

Visualizing the information helped this research to identify common barriers on why some teachers tend to remain in isolation, as well as to identify common characteristics that could lead teachers to enhance integration. Overall, ideas and concepts seems to agree on how teachers face emotional **barriers** such as fear of loosing identity, fear to conflict, fear of losing job, fear of damaging status, fear of having encounters with others, and fear of damaging their image are emotions that mostly keeps them away from sharing with each other in their professional environment. (Figure 3).

Some of these emotional barriers can also be perceived and aligned with the information identified in sense making part one.

Also from these visualized concepts, this research is able to identify **opportunities**, **goals** and **characteristics** to enhance teacher's relationships.

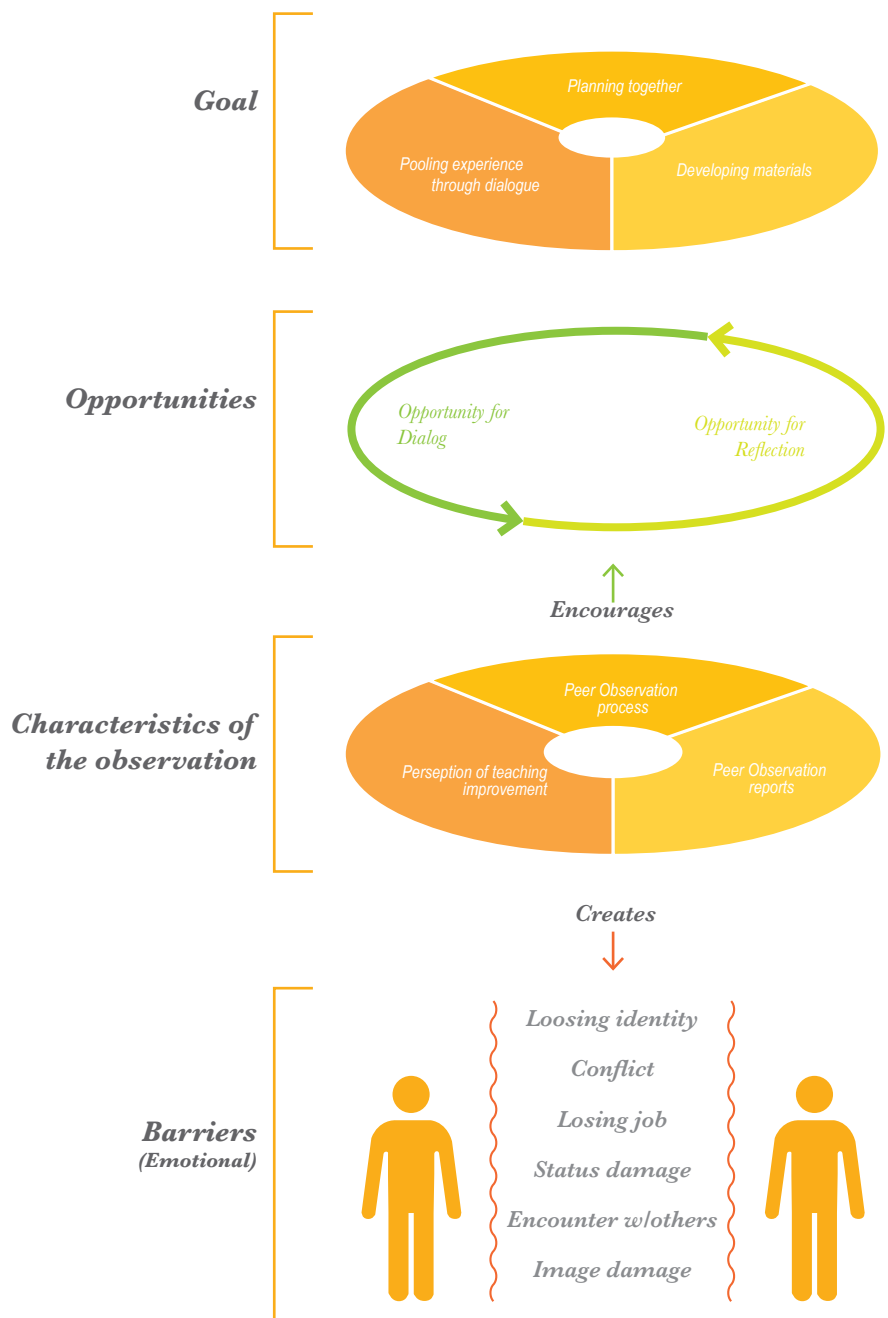


Figure 3

Synthesized data integration

Data findings from both sense making parts are being integrated to a final synthesis. This integration takes this research to a more specific understanding of the peer observation process and the relationships teachers have with it. Also, this final integration is the road towards finding and implementing a solution.

So, as part of the sense making findings of this research, emotional barriers are identified and these emotional barriers seems to keep teachers apart from sharing and learning from each other. Also, through this sense making process, this research identified opportunity areas or ideal characteristics to enhance teacher's experiences and promote an environment that embrace teacher's integration during the peer observation process to enhance learning. Teacher's integration is understood as the opportunity for them to come together and to have a mutual benefit from the interaction.

The identified characteristics are centered by the concept of delivering and receiving feedback.

According to the synthesise data:

- *Teachers should follow the process rubrics as it is stated by the school boards, that way there are no personal matters involved in the process.*
- *Teachers feedback should be focused on teacher's strengths and not to point out weaknesses.*
- *Teachers feedback should be objective and incite to reflection.*

Following these characteristics, the observation process should promote opportunities for a dialog as well as to promote teacher's reflection. And with this, creating an environment of sharing and learning among teachers.
(Figure 4).

Characteristics / opportunities for integration

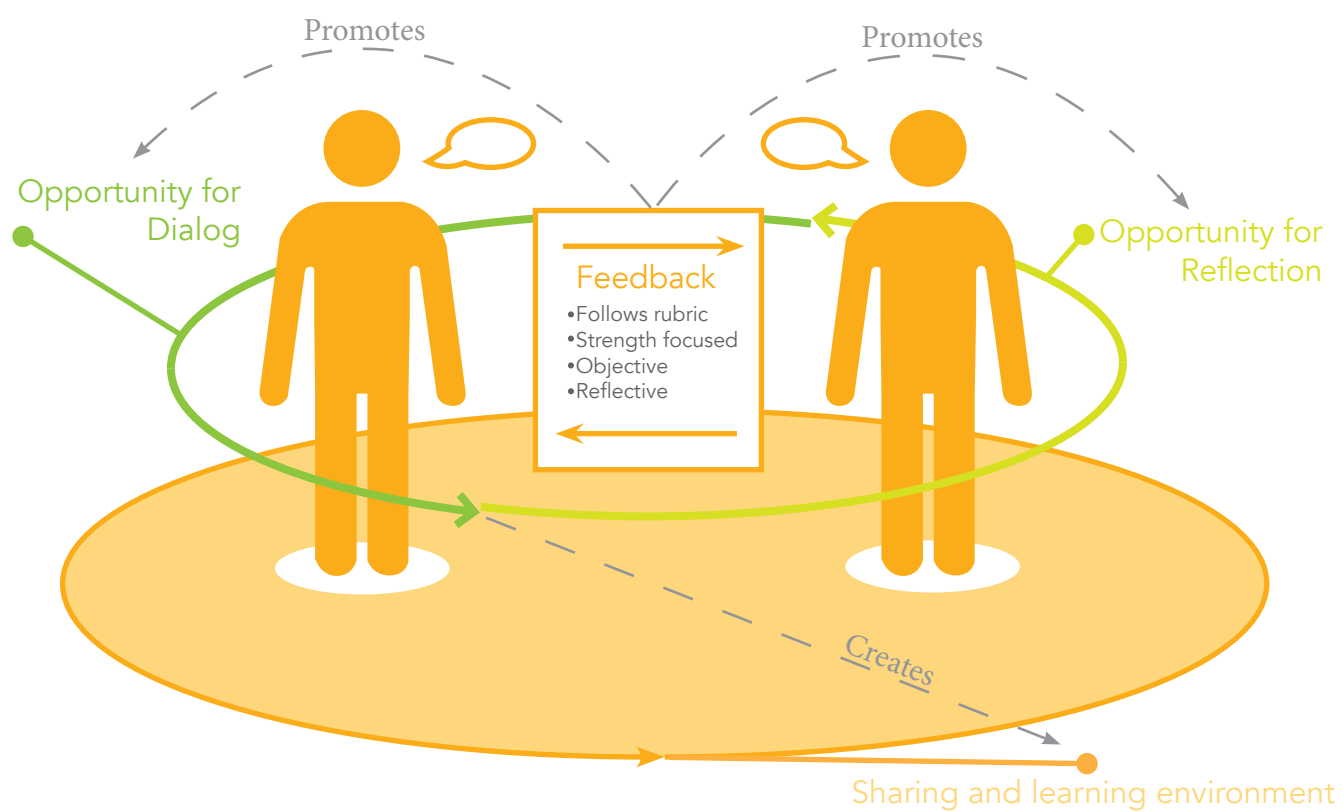


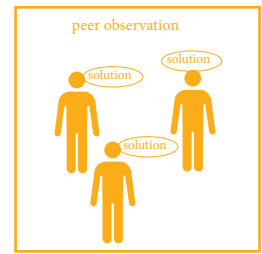
Figure 4

*“Prototyping is
considered a problem
solving technique to
shape a solution”*



Prototype in action

Prototyping

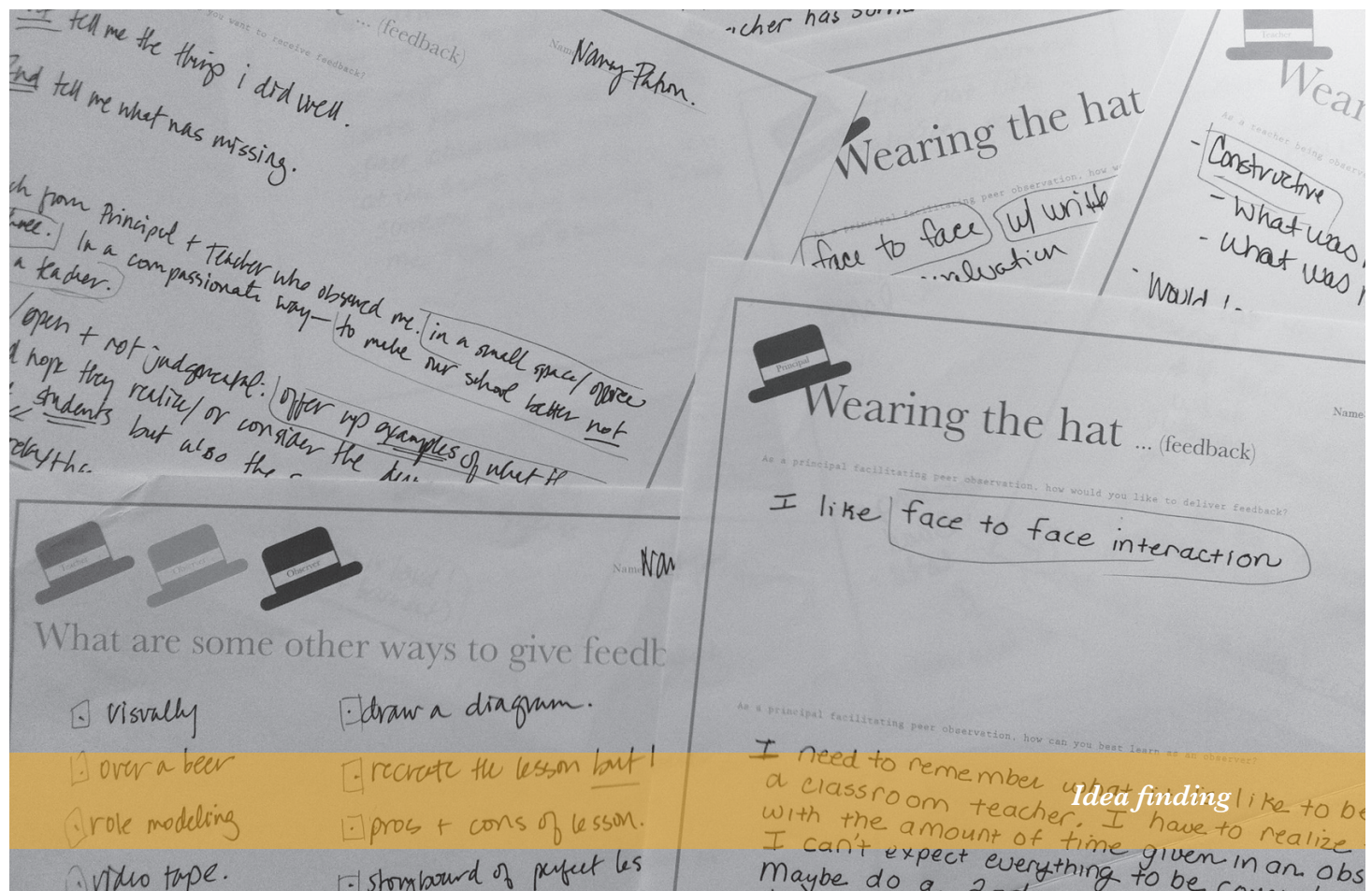


Solution development and implementation

Prototyping

Through the sense making process this research is able to identify characteristics to aid and ease teachers interaction during the peer observation. With this identified characteristics the researcher facilitates an Ideation session with participants to come up with concrete ideas on how to enhance their experience. This ideation session prompted teachers to think about the concept of delivering and receiving feedback.

Through the ideation session, teachers are asked to diverge on ideas to deliver and receive feedback by role playing. Each teacher diverged on solutions as from both perspectives, observer and observed.



Prototyping

Reference cards (Rubric based)

The idea behind these reference cards is to With the intention to promote a shared understanding among teachers about the points that should be covered during the observation and taking into account that some of the characteristics for integration are to follow the rubric and be strengths focused. Reference cards aim to guide and support teachers on these characteristics.

This means, a rubric are existent parameters for teachers to consider during the observation (context based). And strength based is about focusing on the best performance teacher should consider when performing/conducting and observation. Each card has been colored according to the category in which it belongs.

Color-coding each card depending on each category and subcategories, allow teachers to visually recognize the cards easily whenever need refer to other about specific category. At the front of each card teachers can find the subject for each category, on the back of each card teachers can find the highest expectation from the teacher for that category (on regular basis teachers see different levels of expectation that is part of the evaluative system).



The intention behind these “*Reference cards*” is for teachers to have easier access to the rubric statements and focusing on the highest expectancies during observation planning, performing and evaluation.

Prototyping

“My class structure” map

Two main things compose my class structure map: 1- Empty paper space and 2- A set of small-scale rubric cards with only the categories and subcategories written on the front.

The intention behind this tool is for teachers to be able to externalize their class. In other words, creating a visual structure of their future class help teachers to reflect when planning a future class and also helps as a visual support when introducing the plan to other teachers.

MY CLASS STRUCTURE

CLASS:

TEACHER:

DATE:

Expectations

Managing Student Behavior

Environment

Respectful culture

Instructional Plans

Student Work

Assessment

Standards and Objectives

Motivating Students

Presenting Instructional Content

Lesson Structure and Pacing

Activities and Materials

Questioning

Academic feedback

Grouping students

Teacher Content Knowledge

Teacher Knowledge of Students

Thinking

Problem Solving

The learning environment

Designing and planning instruction

Instruction

Prototyping

Observer sheet

This tool is intended for observer teachers. This observation sheet is based on the rubric characteristics as well and has also a set of questions that will aid observant teachers during the peer observation feedback.

The intention behind this tool, is having teachers to reflect on each question and to be prepared to deliver feedback. By following this guideline teachers are encouraged to remain the objective in the process.

Observer sheet

Observed teacher name: _____

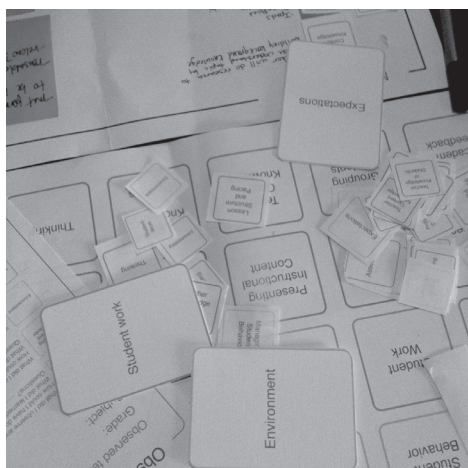
Grade: _____

Subject: _____

Date: _____

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expectations	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Managing Student Behavior	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Environment	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional Plans	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student Work	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assessment	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Standards and Objectives	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Presenting Instructional Content	What did I observe and how it was performed? _____ How could I have done it? _____ What did I learned? _____ Questions? _____

Observer name: _____ Date: _____



Proposed solution: tool integration into the peer observation process

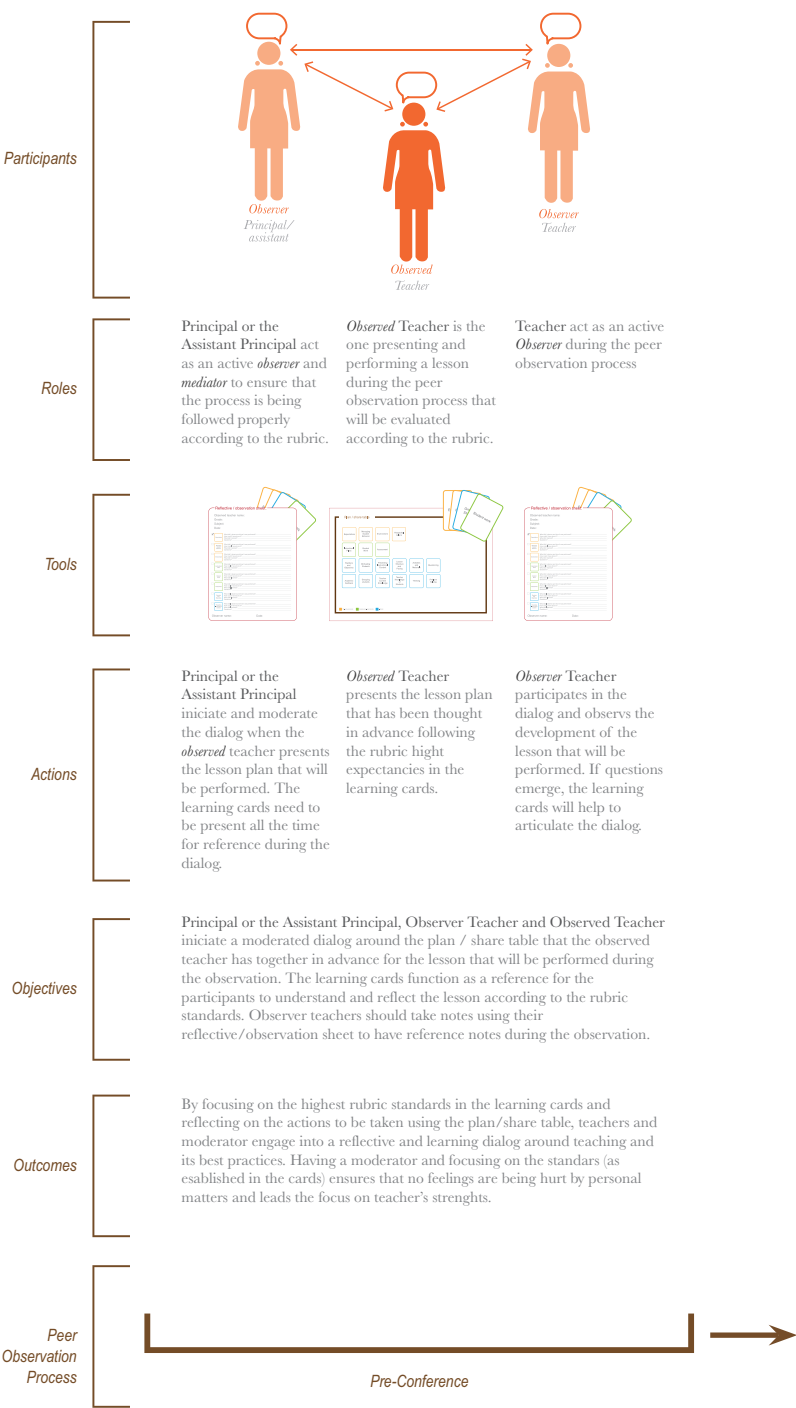
This model shows the integration of the proposed tools into the peer observation. Each tool represent a visual and tangible translation of the identified characteristics that enhance the relationships among teachers.

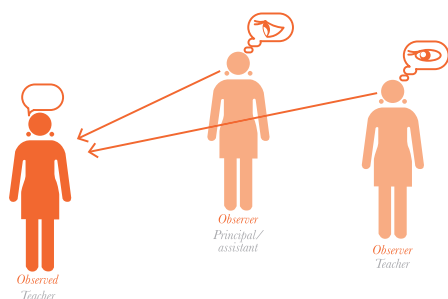
These characteristics were identified through an analysis synthesis process of the data extracted from the involvement of teachers on the research process.

This model shows in detail the role of each participant teacher, actions to be taken, objectives of each step during the observation process and the desirable outcomes on each step.

Sub-Q 3

How might the identified characteristics to enhance teacher's relationships be integrated into the peer observation process?



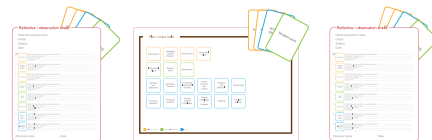
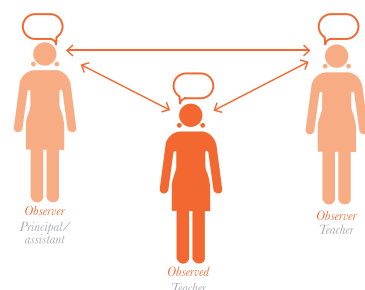


Observed Teacher performs the lesson that was presented during the pre-conference.

Principal or the Assistant Principal and *Observer Teacher* engage into the performance of the lessons previously discussed in the pre-conference. As the lesson takes place observers take notes using the Reflective/observation sheet, where it has prompt questions related to the rubric elements that were covered by the *Observed Teacher*.

To aid *observers teachers* to remain objective during the observation by focusing on the rubric expectations. **This Reflective/observation sheet** also gives observers the opportunity to reflect on what they observed, how they could have done it different (in case they have a different opinion on something), and what did they learned. This reflective prompts work as a guidance for the development of the future dialogue and group reflection for the post-conference.

By having a guide to follow during the observation the **Principal or the Assistant Principal** and **Observer Teacher** will have a clear understanding of what to look for during the observation. Also this reflective / observation sheet brings the possibility to reflect about what was covered during the pre-conference dialog, the actions during the observation and own learnings.



Principal or the Assistant Principal initiate and moderate the dialog among the participants by using the reflective /observation sheet. As well take notes for the final document.

Observed Teacher presents a reflection of what she presented in the pre-conference and the lesson performed using the same Plan /share table.

Observer Teacher participates in the dialog by sharing the reflections towards the observed teacher and its own reflection of what has been learned. (using the reflective /observation sheet.)

To initiate a moderated reflective dialog among the **Principal or the Assistant Principal**, **Observer Teacher** and **Observed Teacher**.

Using the reflective tools, participants create an open, objective and sharing environment, in which they focus on strenghts and follow the rubric standards. As well as the dialog goes they have the opportunity to learn from each other.



Observation



Post-Conference



Discussion / Results

Discussion / Results

This research began with a concern about teachers collaborative learning, since some of them prefer to work and learn isolated from other colleagues. Teacher isolation have had an impact in some areas of education, this impact has put school boards to look on alternatives that get teachers to look for each other. One of these alternatives is the implementation of teachers evaluations. Where these evaluations seek to test and measure teachers accountability and effectiveness for the school system.

Therefore, as presented on this research, some of these evaluative processes such as the peer observation, require teachers to come together and observe each other in their respective classroom. Also, this process request teachers to give each other grades that will measure each other effectiveness. Unfortunately, nowadays and as mentioned in the introduction, this process seems to have some gaps and seems that teachers are regularly giving each other high grades despite their work was poor. Besides, these evaluative processes seems not ease the isolation problem.

It is then, when this research decides to explore and understand how might the peer observation process could work as the vehicle for teachers to interact with each other to enhance teacher to teacher relationships, as well as to enhance the learning from each other.

With this in mind, this research began gathering information, followed a analysis and synthesis process to form an understanding of the problem as to understand and discover opportunities for possible solutions. In order to gather and forming the most meaningful information, this research included teachers in the process as they are the experts of their own experiences.

This means, this research took a participatory approach and began with this research process with the following question:

How might **participatory design** enable the development of a **relationship** based **peer observation process** that enhances **learning communities** among teachers?

This research question enclosed several areas of investigation (sub-questions) to aid on the formulation of an overall conclusion.

Sub-question #1:

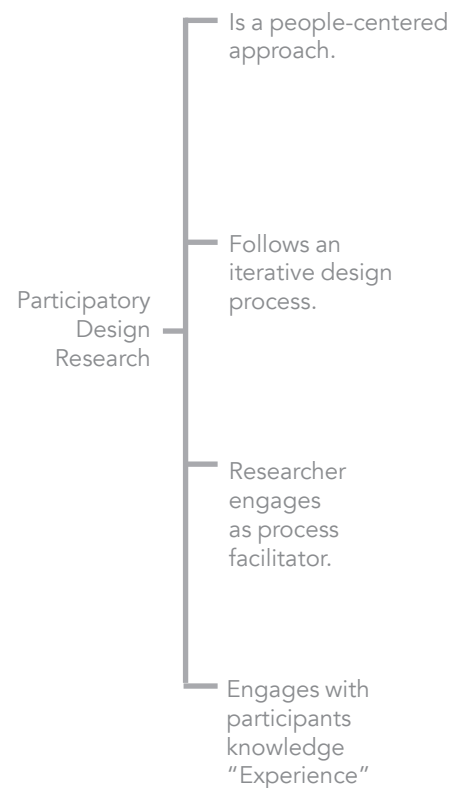
What is the value of a participatory design approach to explore the peer observation process?

The work of a participatory design approach has been defined as process for an evolution, and not for a revolution. (Spinuzzi 168) In this way, involving participant in the research process, helps to understand the current situation (participants situation, from participants perspective), as well as to evaluate finding, develop opportunities and evaluate solutions. Participants are those who are directly involved with the problem.

Each participant has a unique value in the process, as each of them has their own experience and their own vision of how to evolve to a better experience. Participatory design is a people-centered approach, this means, people's knowledge matters. In this case, teachers are the participants on this research. With this, teachers demonstrated interest as participants due their opinion and experience was being taken into account for this research.

With this participatory approach, teachers were able to reflect on their current actions during the peer observation process, and that allowed them identify their fails as well as to ideate on how they envision to have a better experience.

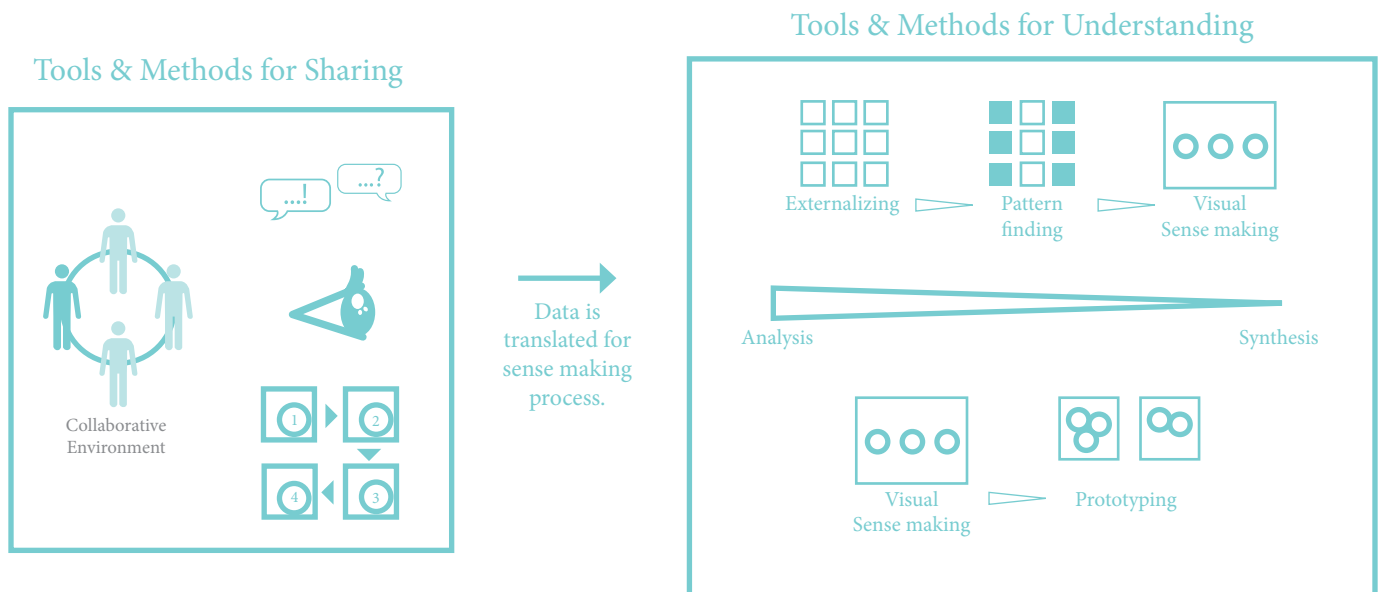
So, the value of this approach lies on the value of participants insights through the research process.



2. How might the elements of design that are incorporated in the participatory approach enable the exploration of factors that affect teacher's relationships during the peer observation process?

As participatory design entitles to the development of tools and methods to engage participants to share, understand and articulate their experiences related to the issue, as well as to the implementation of methods for data understanding, this research saw the opportunity on involving teachers to better create an understanding and seeking for opportunities within the peer observation process, as it can serve as the vehicle for teachers to professionally learn from each other creating learning communities.

So, the elements that allowed this research to facilitate a collaborative environment for sharing and understanding were in the implementations of tools and methods through the process.



Tools and Methods for sharing through the initial exploration of this research (sharing), allowed teachers to articulate their thoughts. Also, through this initial exploration, teachers demonstrated to be open to the idea of being observed while working on their own process. As well, teachers demonstrated accessibility during personal interviews about their experiences. By the time of the implementation of the sequential survey, teachers demonstrated to be eager to participate on it, as they expressed that their opinion was being taken into account for the improvement of their own professional experiences.

After the initial exploration comes the discovery process in which this research implemented tools and methods to create a meaningful understanding of the information. In other words, the sense making process. At this point, the analysis-synthesis process of the information is conducted through several methods such as externalizing the information, pattern finding, etc. As researcher, it is always important to have in mind to implement tailored methods for analysis and methods for synthesis depending on the end objective.

In the case of this research, it was appropriate to pull out and externalize the data coming from teachers. That allowed this process to easily find similarities (pattern) within the information. Those pattern do inform the research about the current situation, as well as it allows the researcher to see gaps within the information that can be treated as opportunities for change.

On the other hand, and as explained before in this research. Visualization is can be used as a method for analysis as it can be used for synthesis of information. Therefore, visualizing information allowed this research to see how things work and could work on the benefit of the teachers.

So, through the implementation of these several methods for analysis and synthesis, this research was able to identify characteristics that were preventing teachers from helping each other.

3. How might the identified characteristics to enhance teacher's relationships be integrated into the peer observation process?

Through the different stages of analysis and synthesis of the information, this research was able to pull out meaningful insights or characteristics that are viable on the improvement of teachers relationships through the peer observation process.

In the case of this research, those characteristics are translated into actionable tools that can be implemented during the peer observation process. In other words, this research along with the participants translated these characteristics into prototypes.

Prototype 1:

Cards that allow teachers to easier follow the peer observation rubric, as it also keeps them focused on the highest expectancies of the rubric. Also, these cards allow teachers to understand hierarchies within the information in the rubric.

Teachers showed concern about having difficulties to keep track of the rubric through the observation process and these rubrics are essential procedures on everyday class. As they also expressed concern on not being able to understand each procedure perfectly leading to misunderstanding when being evaluated.

Prototype 2:

This second prototype allowed teachers to drive other teachers through their class plan as it is expected during the pre-conference of the peer observation process. As teachers expressed some confusion on how to follow the rubric, the information demonstrated a lack of tools for teacher to better articulate their plan as well as to show to other teachers. Not being able to deliver a clear picture of the class plan to be observed, teachers felt insecure during the actual observation as well observant teachers felt to be lost on what exactly which part are to be evaluated.

This research identified the need for a platform to engage teachers into a dialog, as well it acts as a platform of learning as other teachers have a visual representation of the class plan.

Prototype 3:

The third tool is considered a feedback platform. This tool allows teachers to take notes during the observation as well it act as a platform for dialog. By giving specific feedback according to each part of the rubric, teachers have a guide to keep the conversation during the post-conference. This tool guide teachers to focus on other teachers strengths as well as it motivates the observer to reflect and share from their own experiences.

Conclusion

As a result the implementation of a participatory approach, teachers and researcher were able to develop a set of tools that facilitates dialog through the peer observation.

This means, by being able to visualize a plan before the observation, teachers expressed to feel more comfortable explaining class ideas to other teachers, and from the perspective of an observant teachers, they expressed that following “my class structure” allowed them to create a better (picture) understanding of the planned class. By implementing “the rubric cards”, teachers expressed to have better access to the information, but most important, each card allowed them to be focus on important point for the class. Plus, having them as color coded cards, allowed them to easily identify the areas in which the observe teacher is working.

With the creation of “observer sheet” teachers expressed satisfaction on having a guide for them to share, as well as a guide for them to reflect on their own strengths. As it also allowed them to deliver objective feedback to others.

The objective of this research was to understand the peer observation process through the involvement of teachers in the understanding process. Seeking for opportunities for them to enhance their relationships (professional relationships), in that manner opening up doors to the creation of learning communities.

A learning community is an environment in which teacher have the opportunity to learn along side the work they perform. Therefore, with the implementation of each developed tool during the peer observation process, teachers are also creating an environment of learning.



Appendix

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32-

Literature review

Banks, Frank, and Ann Shelton Mayes. Early Professional Development for Teachers. Ormon House, 26-27 Boswell Street, London WC1N 3JZ: David Fulton Publishers Ltd, 2001. Chapter 10, Burgess, Hilary 84-97. Print.

Early Professional Development compile a different range of articles related to the importance of teachers seeking to support each other and be able to move from novice teaching level to an expert teaching level.

On chapter ten of this book "Working with others to develop professional practice" by Hilary Burgess, the author talks about opportunity for teachers and schools to become 'learning schools'. In other words, the author believes that having inexperienced teachers are valuable assets for schools as they can learn from experienced teachers and viceversa creating effective communities of learning.

Therefore, she sees the opportunity on collaborative environments. The author refers to learning communities as a space where individuals have the opportunity to learn at the same time as they perform their work task.

This article is relevant as it suggests characteristics that an effective community of practice should consider such as: Reflection in action, planning and evaluation as learning, learn from themselves, etc.

Day, Christopher, and Qing Gu. The New Lives of Teachers. 1st ed. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

The authors provide relevant perspectives that analyses and understand teachers' lives. By presenting a diverse range teaching examples, authors demonstrate the levels in which teachers manage to overcome the challenges in between their personal and professional personal lives, while facing constant work and external policy challenges.

The authors cover positive and negative perspectives on career and professional development and how these influences of school leadership, culture, colleagues and conditions that support teacher's work and life balance.

This book covers relevant information about the influence of learning communities in teachers' lives. About the role of learning communities for learning), the authors mention: "In such learning and achievement communities, learning will be perceived as central rather than peripheral, integral for the continuing endeavors of teachers to improve teaching, which results in successful learning". (30)

Dubberly, Hugh, Shelley Evenson, and Rick Robinson. "The Analysis-Synthesis Bridge Model." n. page. Print.

His article presents an explanation of how designers bridge the gap between analysis and synthesis. The Analysis-Synthesis model is a way to visualize how designer's thoughts start with a concrete analysis of what "is", move to an abstract analysis and develop a model of what "is", moving into an abstract synthesis developing a model of what "could be", finalizing with a concrete synthesis of what "could be".

It is on this way that this article has a strong influence on the development of this research project. Its transferability is applicable within this participatory process as it is used as platform for understanding. The platform model used for this research project resembles to Dubberly's "Analysis-Synthesis Bridge Model".

Kolko, Jon. Exposing the Magic of Design: A Practitioner's Guide to the Methods and Theory of Synthesis. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2011.

In this book, the author shares a perspective of what synthesis is, why it is important, and how to use it throughout the a design process. Synthesis, as described by Kolko, is a process of making meaning (3). Kolko presents several sets of methods for design synthesis and with it, prompting designers to make sense out of complicated data. As Elizabeth Sanders advocates for the involvement of participants to learn more about their experiences and use it as a source of inspiration, Kolko's perspetive aligns with her idea by advocating to the meaningful understanding of data.

Leonard, Dorothy, and Sylvia Sensiper. "The Role of Tacit Knowledge in Group Innovation." California management Review. 40.3 (1998): 112. Print.

The authors of this article believe, that the capacity of the human mind to make sense of lifetime's collection of experience and to connect patterns from the past to the present and future is, by its very nature, hard to capture. Therefore, this article takes a close look at the importance of the management of tacit knowledge for the benefit of innovation.

Tacit knowledge is general explained as the set of information that human mind learn through experience and resides in the unconscious or semiconscious, and becomes explicit knowledge through externalizing.

This article sustains the importance of tacit knowledge within group innovation and the exploration of this kind of knowledge align with the values of participatory research. This means, through the implementation of methods and tools people is able to articulate this inner information to better understand a problem, as well as to develop a solution.

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. "A Teacher Evaluation System That Works". Research Brief. August 2010.

The National Institute for Excellence teaching presents a brief description of the purpose of their research on teacher evaluation. It refers to how teachers are being evaluated with the highest notes and despite these high ratings on teacher's evaluations; schools do not reflect evidence with student's achievement. Therefore, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching believes that "evaluation on teacher performance is seldom conducted in any rigorous way". So, they reported an evaluation through the implementation of the TAP evaluation system.

It seems that the TAP evaluation (among other evaluation systems) provides better feedback on teacher performance, classrooms evaluations are aligned with value-added student achievement outcomes, teachers become more effective over time, and Schools that have implemented the TAP system showed higher retention of effective teachers and higher turnover of less effective teachers.

This TAP evaluation report is relevant for this research as the TAP system is being analyzed along with two others not only for effectiveness but also as for its structure for teacher's interaction.

Peterson, Penelope L., and Michelle A. Comeaux. "Evaluating the Systems: Teacher's Perspectives on Teacher Evaluation." Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. 12.1 (1990): 3-24. Print.

On this paper, the authors talk about the analysis implemented on different evaluation systems. Their research covers several aspects of teacher evaluation, context and content. The authors present this research as a form to demonstrate how evaluations can be "viewed as a opportunity for positive interaction and professional growth among colleagues or as a negative "requirement" that leads to frustration or embitterment". (4)

On their arguments, the authors argue, "teacher evaluation is primarily an organizational problem, not a technical problem" (6). As a conclusion of their research, the authors mention how "teachers consistently stated that the purpose of evaluation should be to promote teachers' reflection on practice" (22). Therefore, this document demonstrates the importance of reflection through evaluation.

P. Fiszler, Edward. How Teachers Learn Best. 1st ed. Maryland: Scarecrow Education, 2004. Print.

Edward Fiszler in this book mentions that teachers following traditional professional development models often fails. He believes this happens because the pedagogics implemented are not ailing with current practices or active learning. Fiszler suggest that in order to reach a good quality of professional development, teachers need to shift their behavior from isolation to a culture of collaboration. This means, all staff members of the learning organization are on the same page and focusing on the same goal.

The important aspects of this book relies on how Fiszler sees the opportunities on these collaborative cultures. Also he states that sharing experiences through dialog, teachers can incorporate new strategies in

each others plans. These dialogs are intended to promote reflection that can potentially support assumptions and old methods of evaluation.

Also, Fiszler sees that reflection and dialog is a mutually benefit for teachers relationships. Therefore, he mentions how peer observation allow teachers to get ideas from teachers who are doing things differently.

Palmer, Parker J. The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007. Print.

In this book Palmer describes the meaning of truth, and the importance of teachers to come together as a community and build trustiness upon that. He describes how important is for teachers to seek for support and new opportunities to growth.

Sanders, Elizabeth B.N. "From user-centered to participatory design approaches." Taylor & Francis. (2002): n. page. Print.

In this article, Sanders shares her perspective on how the role of researchers, designers and users are connected within the user-centered design process. She mentions that in this settings researchers collect and interpret users information that is later interpreted by the designer to create something. She mentions that in this case the user is not really part of the team, but is spoken by the researcher.

On the other hand, Sanders also explains how things have evolved, to the creation of participative experiences. In this case, the roles of designers and researchers are integrated and users are more involved into the design process.

Therefore, the importance of this article relies on the idea that involving people (users) allows to learn more about their past, current and potential experiences. And it "becomes vital to the process of designing the communication". Also, Sanders suggest taking advantage of people's experiences and making it the source of inspiration to better design for experiencing.

Sanders, Elizabeth B.-N. "Information, Inspiration and Co-creation." Paper presented at The 6th International Conference of the European Academy of Design, March 29-31 2005, University of the Arts, Bremen, Germany. n. Page 4. Print.

Sanders presents an overview of the landscape of human-centered research in design practice, and explains on how design research has been moving progressively to the front end of the design development process. Her review demonstrate how shifts in design approaches invites to adopt new perspectives on the way we refer and involve people in the design process.

The relevance of this article on this research relies on the measurement of finding the balance for people's involvement in the process, in this case, participants articulate their own experiences through the implementation of design research methods. These methods, as Sanders explains, "enable expression by giving people ambiguous visual stimuli to work with". These methods work toward creating an understanding and empathy.

*Spinuzzi, Clay. "The Methodology of Participatory Design ."
Technical Communication. 52.2 (2005): Print.*

The author in this article discusses how he sees participatory design research as an approach to design rather than a just rigorous methodology. This article covers some historic background of participatory design but it is mainly focused on the core idea of the participatory approach; the involvement of people. Spinuzzi remarks the objective of participatory design is the understanding of people's knowledge.

By knowledge he refers to "tacit" knowledge. He explains as follow:
"Tacit knowledge is implicit rather than explicit, holistic rather than bounded and systematized; it is what people know without being able to articulate".

This article is important as Spinuzzi refers to participatory design research as flexible interaction in between designers and users, and describes this research process in three basic stages: 1-Initial exploration of work, 2-Discovery process and 3-prototyping. Also, in this article Spinuzzi explains from his perspective the limitations of this participatory methodology as well as he explains ways to evaluate participatory design.

Willerman, Marvin, and L. McNeely Sharon. Teachers Helping Teachers. 1st ed. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991. Print.

The authors of this book discuss on the issue of peer observation. According to the authors, peer observation or "peer coaching" is a method that involves teachers helping other teachers to improve their teaching techniques within their classroom settings. This book explores different terminologies that describes the same action of observation, and how each term and its connotation, has affected the development of this process in different ways.

Peer observation is described by the authors as a method for teachers to help each other, they also describe teacher isolation as one mayor obstacle for improvement. This book works as a reference book for teachers who are looking to implement peer observation in their schools, as it explain teachers each step of the process and show them how to evaluate the results.

Methods transcripts

1) WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE PEER OBSERVATION PROCESS?

-Have not experienced peer observation but was observed by the principal and assistant principal. My guess is that the peer observation will be similar but that the other teacher (peer) will be observing me from her perspective as a "teacher"

-I believe she will have a rubric / criteria to observe / criticize me if I was the teacher being the "peer".

-I would be interested in how well the teacher engaged the class.

-Personal opinions

-Checklists

-Meeting with the people observing you

-A schedule

-A co-worker and a person at the head of the school

-A meeting with the principal and the person observing me to let her know what lesson she will be observing.

-Meet with the principal and the person that I will be observing to hear what lesson she will be doing.

-After my observation I meet with the principal and the person observing me to get their insights on my strengths and things to work on

-The same thing happens as above – except I put my input on who I observed.

-All teachers are schedule a time for pre-observation conference, observation and post observation conference.

2) HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED PEER OBSERVATION?

-Friends (teachers) are going thru the process now. I believe the "peer observation is a good idea in addition to the principal / assistant principal because the teacher will be looking at the teacher from the perspective of teaching a class as opposed to principal / assistant principal looking at it from standards / achievement.

-I have not experienced it but I feel like it would be a very nervous situation for both parties at hand.

-I have not experienced it yet, but I am nervous enough having one person observe me, let alone too.

-I am comfortable with who is observing me, but if I were partnered with a "critical" person I would probably fall apart during my observation.

-I understand the reasoning behind peer observation; I will let you know in 2 weeks how I felt about it.

-Like anything; if I do well, I will probably be for it. If I flop, I will feel negative about it.

-Reducing threat / stress is important. Identifying teacher strength and focusing on strength has huge benefits.

-Then it is important to identify an area to strengthen from the lesson.

3) POSITIVE

- Follows a rubric
- Don't have to worry about what the other teacher (peer) thinks of lesson
- If another (peer) was in the room I think it would be good to see other teachers.
- Only one person judges you
- Do not have to worry about people that "do not like you" criticizing you.
- Principal begins with what I thought I did well
- Non-threatening
- Focuses on strengths and what needs to be improved rather than "weaknesses".
- Hopefully the peer teacher, being in my shoes, will understand when small mistakes happen due nerves and not harp on those things
- Learning new strategies from others
- Reducing threat / stress is important. Identifying teacher strength and focusing on strength has huge benefits.
- Then it is important to identify an area to strengthen from the lesson.

4) NEGATIVE

-Only principal and assistant principal

-Only their perspective

-Only standards based and achievement based

-Does not pay much attention to

- o Fun
- o Engaging
- o Interesting
- o Effective
- o Children likes lesson

-Only get one person opinion / advice

-Do not learn from your peers

-Not as much teamwork between co-worker

-Teachers do not learn about the observation process

-A non-creative teacher observing a creative one or vice-versa may not understand the process or lesson. It may be too involved – seems to noisy not structured enough.

-The observing teacher will have to step out their “own box” own comfort zone to be able to identify with the peer teacher.

-We need to open to each other’ ideas even if it is not the way we would teach the lesson.

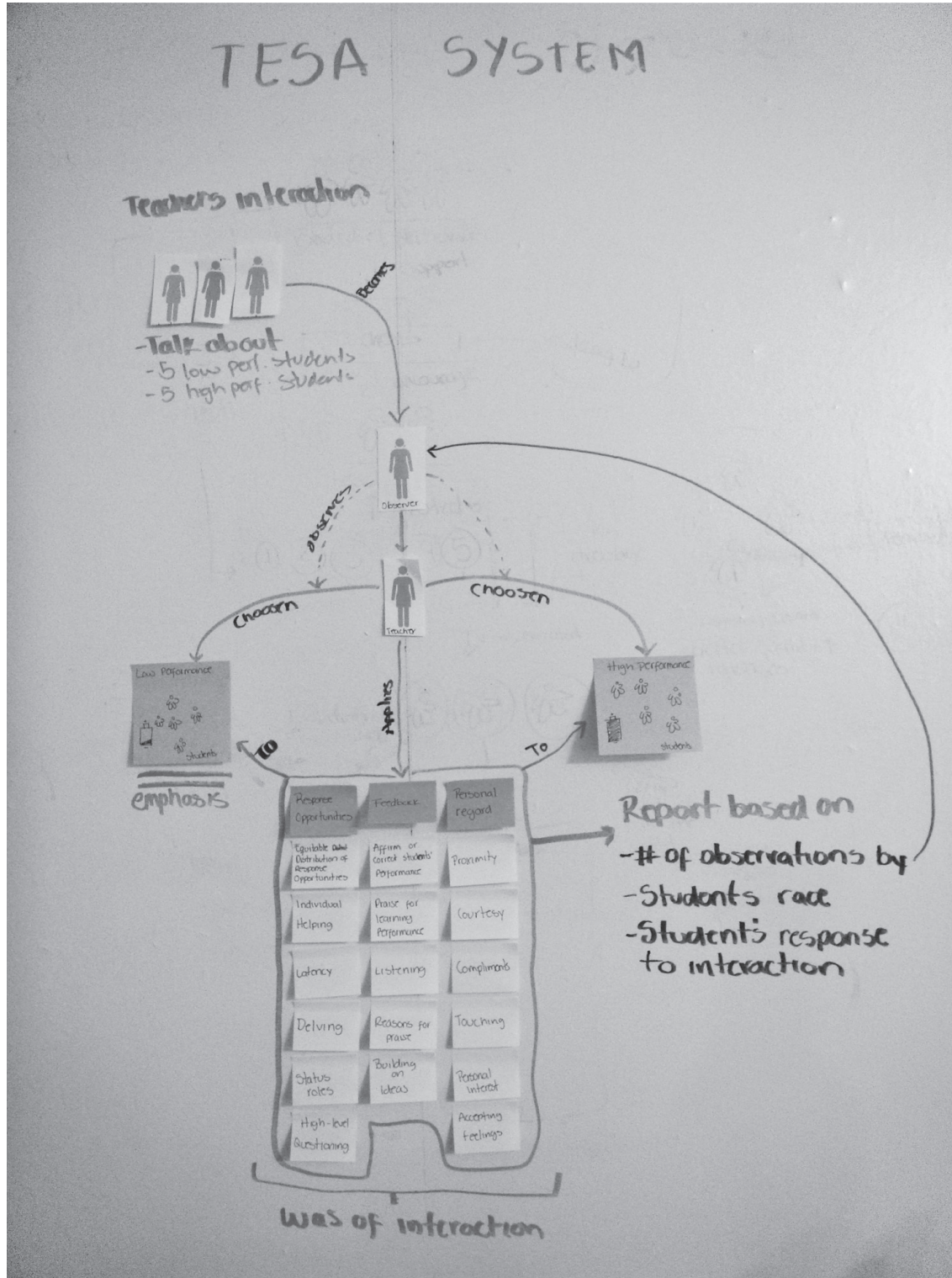
-Some teachers will use this as an opportunity to cut someone down, someone they already feel threatened by, rather than being what it’s meant to be; a learning experience by both parties.

-Some teachers feel they are so good that they can’t improve.

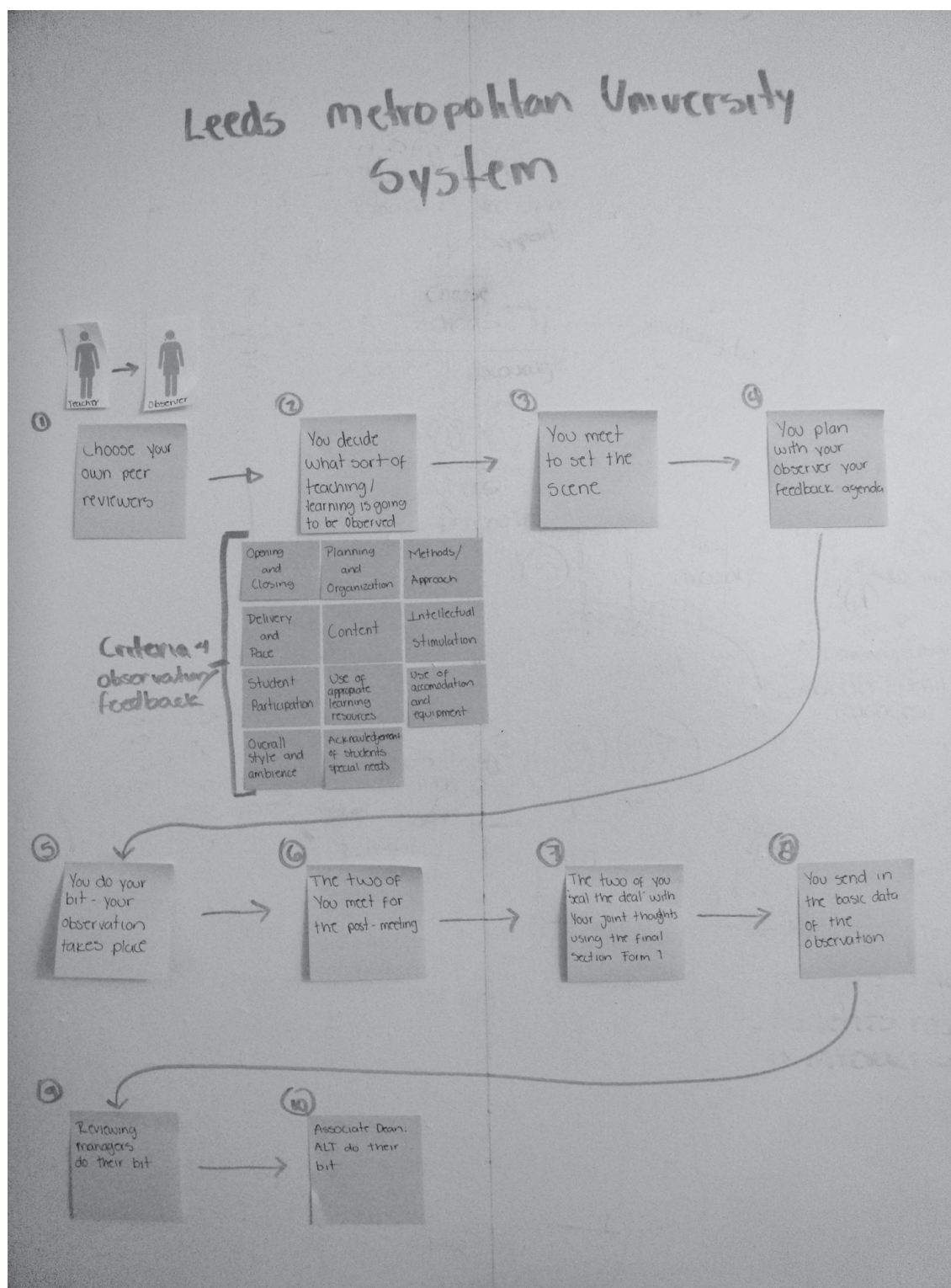
5) HOW MIGHT WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE POSITIVE ASPECTS?

- Following a rubric: gives a framework for the observation. So that the observer has guidelines and direction and has boundaries to stay within.
- Could even give prompts so that the observer notices certain things that are important.
- Helps keep the comments positive and constructive.
- We should look at the peer observations as a way to unite as a team and make the school a better educational system
- We should learn to share ideas, opinions, and observations with each other.
- Peer observations allow the teachers to have a say in the efficiency of the schools education system
- I feel that sometimes a school staff becomes very involved in "friendships" and loose track of "professional friendship".
- Peer observation would help keep a school professional.
- I think when good things happen to us we become motivated to even do more work harder, etc.
- If peer teacher is complementary, it will build our self-esteem. Maybe we will be compliment on something we didn't even realize we were doing.
- If the principal views something as negative maybe the peer teacher will lighten the blow by mentioning they have done it that way too.
- There might be a good balance of suggestions if you have 2 people doing 2 different jobs, having different roles, observing you.
- Maybe the principal will re evaluate her observation remarks on ideals- it might be a wake up call as a reminder of what it is like to be a teacher with all the demands. Although my principal is amazing, and I don't have any qualms about my current observations.
- Celebrate / recognizing growth in instruction in a given area.

Visualizing peer observation processes



Visualizing peer observation processes



Visualizing peer observation processes

